

Crown Prince returns from Britain

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Crown Prince Hamzah returned home Wednesday from the U.K., where he is pursuing his studies at Sandhurst College, to take part in the late King Hussein's eulogy. His Majesty King Abdullah and HRH Princess Rania Al Abdullah received the Crown Prince at the airport. Also receiving him were Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf Rawabdeh, Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti, Their Royal Highnesses Prince Hashem and Prince Rashed, and the chief of staff of the Royal Airforce.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز مؤسسة صحفية الاردنية الراي

World Bank to loan Jordan \$55 million for water projects

AMMAN (Petra) — The World Bank will extend a \$55 million loan to Jordan to help improve water resources and launch sewage system projects in Greater Amman Municipality, a World Bank statement said Wednesday. The projects are expected to cost a total of \$136 million.

Volume 24 Number 7098

AMMAN THURSDAY-FRIDAY MARCH 18-19, 1999, DHUL HILJA-1, 1419

Price: Jordan 200 Fils



JORDAN TODAY marks the 40th day since the passing of King Hussein with prayers, tributes and charitable activities around the Kingdom

King designates Queen Noor to head King Hussein Foundation

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Wednesday designated Her Majesty Queen Noor to establish and head the King Hussein Foundation as the "embodiment of Al Hussein's vision, his religious, moral and social values."

In a letter addressed to Queen Noor, King Abdullah paid tribute to his late father's life and work and highlighted the goals of the planned foundation.

Following is the text of King Abdullah's letter to Queen Noor:

I extend to Your Majesty my best wishes, respect and appreciation.

His late Majesty King Hussein, God bless his soul, derived his strength from his deep faith, his great heart, his true humanity and noble character. He was most mindful to instill the noble religious, moral and social values in the souls and minds of our dear Jordanian youth. He knew that these values were pivotal in the formation of the character of our society, and its cultural, psychological and social identities.

These values are the ultimate assurance for releasing and channelling creative energy toward the common good that contribute to social

progress and to augmenting cooperation and tolerance within our society. This consequently leads to greater bonds among our citizens, thereby enhancing national unity by concentrating on objective thinking, beneficial civilised dialogue and unanimity on common denominators in regard of all our national causes.

During all this, you were, Your Majesty, the companion of Al Hussein's way, sharing his thoughts, his faith and his constant work for the good of Jordan and Jordanians. He entrusted you to head the NHF, where your outstanding efforts in building the foundation, and your dedication to its work, are always cherished and respected by our one Jordanian family, whatever their roots and origins.

Therefore, to fulfill the legacy/message of the late King, and to continue his legacy in continuous giving, we saw that a foundation should be established in the Kingdom bearing his name: "The Foundation of King Hussein/The King Hussein Foundation" and would designate it to Your Majesty to establish it and head it.

This foundation, Enshallah, will be, with your patronage, the embodiment of Al Hussein's vision, his religious, moral and social values,

which he represented. It will support and promote sustainable human development and peaceful relations among people, the protection of the natural environment and will ensure security and social stability. In the fields of activity of the foundation, it will perhaps help, in cooperation with other establishment institutions, to deepen the values that the late King represented and to develop education to provide incentives for excellence, and to help in providing health care services and environmental protection as well as social justice, and raise standard of living for Jordanians for social stability and national security.

On the international level, I would like the foundation to participate with Jordanians and its officials to complete Al Hussein's legacy by building bridges with the world and lifting Jordan in international milieu on an official and civil level.

I designate to Your Majesty this task, which we all hold dear to our hearts, and express my absolute trust in that you are the best person for this task and affirm my complete support to you and to those who will work with you in these important fields. I pray that God will keep you safe.

Al Salam Aleikum
Wa Rahmatu Allah

King meets with press association council

Press has role in helping Jordan face challenges and hardships — King

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Abdullah yesterday told journalists that the sky is the limit for press freedoms in the Kingdom.

"The press has a role in mobilising the nation to face challenges and hardships," King Abdullah said yesterday during a meeting with the council of the Jordan Press Association (JPA). "The press and media are effective tools in charting the course of national action and in focusing on development issues."

The meeting with the King was the last in a series of meetings between the JPA and high-ranking officials since the appointment of the

new government just over two weeks ago.

King Abdullah also appealed to the press body to abide by a code of ethics and to place the national interest above all other considerations.

Officials have often suggested that the JPA's failure to enforce a code of ethics, embedded in the JPA law, on its members resulted in earlier governments' harsh attitude towards the press and in the controversial Press and Publications Law enacted last summer.

The JPA earlier this week met with Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti and last week with Prime Minis-

ter Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh. Journalists and media observers have interpreted the immediate attention granted to the press body as a signal that the Press and Publications Law file has been reopened in earnest.

JPA President Seif Sherif told the Jordan Times that King Abdullah said he had instructed the Rawabdeh government to study the law and return their comments on it to him, and that there would be other meetings to discuss the issue.

In an earlier interview, Sherif said that although the press law and other media issues ranked low on the governments list of priori-

ties, the JPA felt that the Royal Court and government were giving the law, the introduction of which has been a cause of national friction since mid-1997, high priority.

There have been no promises from anyone, but King Abdullah has asked the government for their comments, and [the JPA] has been asked to voice its concerns to the Information Ministry, which we have done," he said. "We are encouraged by the fact that we are the first [of 13] professional associations to meet with officials, and by the fact that the Parliament also has shown a willing-

ness to reopen this file."

Twelve Lower House deputies last week submitted a petition to House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali to reintroduce the press law to the House agenda.

Also during the meeting, Sherif said the JPA unveiled a plan for an annual media prize named in commemoration of the late King Hussein. The Al Hussein Journalism Award will be awarded by a council of prominent figures to one journalist each year for outstanding reporting. The award is valued at JD5,000. Sherif said nomination and selection details are likely to be finalised by next week.

Lower House denounces Israeli plan to reduce water supplies

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Legislators Wednesday denounced Israel's decision to reduce water supplies to Jordan under the 1994 peace treaty with the majority demanding the government review the agreement.

Others went even further. Earlier, 17 deputies in the 80-member chamber submitted a petition to House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali urging the government to revoke the peace treaty to protest Israel's decision to cut water supplies.

The motion was thrown out by Parliament after failing to win a simple majority of 41 votes.

Deputies, including pro-government tribal leaders and politicians, said the planned water cut "violated a fundamental element of the treaty" and was "tantamount to evading its provisions."

"The Israeli move casts suspicion on the Middle East peace process as a whole," said a House statement, reflecting anger and frustration with Tel Aviv's recent announcement.

Israel informed Jordan on Sunday that it will cut by 40 per cent Jordan's share of water from the Lake Tiberias as stipulated in the Jordan-Israel peace treaty.

Under the peace treaty, Israel extracts 12 million cubic metres (mcm) of water from the Yarmouk River in summer and Jordan uses the rest. In winter, Israel takes 33 mcm from the river of which 20 mcm are stored for Jordan in Lake Tiberias for the Kingdom's use in summer.

Israel said that it was not able to collect the 20 mcm from the Yarmouk this winter because of the regional drought.

"It is a violation of the fundamentals of peace treaty and

Israel wants to hurt Jordan: Syria

DAMASCUS (AFP) — Syria accused Israel Wednesday of seeking to harm Jordan, the Arab country with which the Jewish state has the closest ties, by cutting water supplies guaranteed under their 1994 treaty and other moves.

"Jordan is the target of aggressive Israeli plans and the waters which should be supplied to it in fact belong to it. They are Arab waters acquired by military force," the Syrian government newspaper Tishrin said.

"Israel wants harm to come to Jordan as well as to the Palestinians, Syria and Lebanon."

"[Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu's tour of the Jordan Valley, his promises to build large settlements there and to stop providing Jordan with water are flagrant provocations to Jordan," Tishrin said.

"The Netanyahu government is a real threat to the region's security and stability. It wants both the land and the water to go ahead with its settlement policy even if it deprives the Arabs of their rights," the paper said.

(Continued on page 7)

Palestinians condemn, Israelis hail Congress vote on statehood

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The Palestinians reacted angrily Wednesday to a vote by U.S. lawmakers opposing a declaration of an independent Palestinian state, while Israel hailed the decision.

"The U.S. Congress has no right to deny unilaterally the just and lawful right of a people to rid itself of occupation and to decide its own future in common with all the other peoples of the world," Palestinian Presidential Secretary Tayeb Abdul Rahim told AFP.

"The legislature of the United States cannot tell others what they may and what they may not do," he said angrily.

The House of Representatives passed a resolution on Tuesday opposing the unilateral

declaration of a Palestinian state and warning Palestinian President Yasser Arafat that it would cut off all financial aid to the Palestinian National Authority if such an announcement is made.

The Senate adopted a similar bill last week.

Arafat himself, when asked about the vote, confined himself to reminding the United States of its obligations under the 1993 Oslo accords while leaving open the option of postponing the announcement of a state.

"There are agreements which have been approved. I hope that they will be respected," Arafat told journalists as he returned to Gaza after visiting Spain, Finland and Nor-

way.

But the Palestinian leader pointedly did not recommit himself to May 4 as the date for the announcement of a state, saying only that he would call a meeting of the Palestinian leadership before then to decide on a course of action.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, embroiled in a general election campaign, hailed the congressional vote as "a responsible decision which will strengthen peace and security."

"This was a responsible decision which will strengthen peace and security while lessening the threat of a Palestinian state being created with

Jerusalem as its capital," Netanyahu said in a statement after the vote was announced.

Abdul Rahim fired back that the resolution was designed to boost Netanyahu's Likud Party and other right-wing groups in the Israeli elections due on May 17.

"It is an expression of support for the extreme right in Israel so that it can continue occupying Palestinian land and intensify its campaign of settlement and it will lead to the blowing up of the peace process," he said.

"The vote by Congress at this time represents a clear intervention against the powers of peace in Israel during an election campaign," he said.

Opinion poll finds high public confidence in Rawabdeh government

By Amy Henderson

AMMAN — A public opinion poll has shown that the new government, appointed two weeks ago, has captured public confidence after several months of waning faith in the previous government.

A survey conducted by the Centre for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan showed that 43.6 per cent of the general public believe that the recently appointed government of Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh will be very successful in shouldering its responsibilities to meet its stated mandate.

Opinion leaders — defined as senior statesmen, political analysts, party leaders, union and professional association activists and writers, including journalists and editors — showed slightly less confidence in the government's ability, but still gave it a 38.8 per cent approval rating, the highest given by opinion leaders to any government since the CSS began opinion polling in 1996 with the premiership of Abdul Karim Kabariti, who is now Royal Court chief.

Nearly 48 per cent of the general public believe that Rawabdeh himself will be very successful in his mission, and among his opinion leader

colleagues almost 50 per cent responded that he will master his mandate.

Just over 31.5 per cent and 36.5 per cent of the general public and opinion leaders, respectively, believe that Rawabdeh will be moderately successful, while 2.9 and 4.2 per cent, respectively, said the premier will not be successful at all.

Results of the survey, the fourth of its kind carried out by the CSS, have found for the third time a public that holds the prime minister in higher esteem than the Cabinet as a whole.

But, respondents have again defied expectations with such high approval

ratings. Last August, when the former government of Abdul Salam Majali was dismissed to make way for that of Fayez Tarawneh, pundits expected that political and popular tension, created by the enactment of the Press and Publications Law, charges of nepotism and corruption and a water pollution crisis, would be relieved; a sentiment that was expected to be reflected in favourable public opinion ratings of the Tarawneh government. Instead, the survey showed that confidence in government had been severely battered and meted out a harsh judgement on the new executive.

Only 33.8 per cent of the general public believed then that Tarawneh and team would be very successful.

"I think the ratings can be attributed to the new era," said CSS Director Mustafa Hamamneh, in analysing the survey results. "There are so many changes. We have a new King, and we have seen so much international support," he said, referring to pledges of financial and military aid promised by Jordan's regional and international allies last month. "It's a sign that people expect more. And it's an indication of Rawabdeh's tough-guy image."

The new premier is a career politician who has served as a minister in five previous governments and is a three-time Lower House deputy, representing Irbid. He led the centrist Reawakening Party until it merged with eight other groups in the National Constitutional Party from which Rawabdeh has resigned. He is respected for broad knowledge and a caustic tongue. Officials who have worked with him have described him as a tough nut, even confrontational, but generally undaunted by harsh criticism.

(Continued on page 7)

Twejri, who offered his condolences on the passing of King Hussein, spoke about the organisation's programmes and plans, commending Jordan's cooperation with ISESCO and assistance in providing services to the Arab and Islamic worlds.

The meeting was attended by Royal Court Chief Abdul Karim Kabariti and Education Minister Izzat Jaradat.

Earlier, Twejri held a meeting with Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh, who said Jordan will support ISESCO and continue activities which aim at bolstering and promoting scientific research programmes.

The prime minister said the organisation plays a significant role in developing cultural and educational programmes and also backs overall development projects in Islamic countries.

Twejri noted that the organisation and the Education Ministry have in the past few years carried out joint programmes to train teachers and develop educational curricula.

Twejri held a meeting earlier with the education minister and discussed continued coordination between the organisation and Jordan in educational fields.

They discussed the organisation's plan for developing school curricula in Arab and Islamic countries.

Twejri said ISESCO is currently preparing for two major technology conferences in conjunction with UNESCO which will be held in Budapest in June and Seoul in April.

Al Jazirah resumes work after 4 months of closure

By Alla Shukri Hamzeh

AMMAN — The Doha-based Al Jazirah satellite TV station office in Amman said on Wednesday it resumed operations last Monday after receiving the go ahead from Minister of Information Nasser Lawzi.

Mohammad Ajlouni, the director of Al Jazirah office in Amman, told the Jordan Times he received a telephone call from the minister allowing the station to reopen after four months of closure.

In an unprecedented move against any foreign media office, former Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh's government had ordered the closure of Al Jazirah on Nov. 4 in protest of a talk-show programme that attacked the Kingdom and its leadership.

The fiery weekly programme "Al Itijah Al

Muakess" (the opposite direction) had dedicated one broadcast to discussing the fourth anniversary of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty. The show turned into what Jordanian viewers considered as "Jordan bashing," by anchorman Faisal Qassem, and one of his two guest speakers, Mohammad Khalifah. Khalifah had accused Jordan of conspiring with Israel since its foundation in 1948, saying the Jordanian army had surrendered Palestinian land to the Israelis "without any resistance," and describing Jordan as an artificial entity.

The government responded by accusing the station of slander, cancelling the accreditation of Al Jazirah's six employees, protesting to the Embassy of Qatar demanding concrete changes against what it

described as its "pattern of targeting Jordan," and demanding an official and public apology by those responsible.

No apologies were delivered. "Despite the closure, the Tarawneh government was not aggressive but rather cordial," said the Al Jazirah producer in Amman, Tareq Ayyoub.

During its four-month closure the station was not allowed story coverage except those regarding late King Hussein's return home from the Mayo Clinic in January, his funeral and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Amman earlier this month. "We were invited by the Press and Publications Department to cover King Hussein's funeral, however we were not allowed to transmit our material through JTV like the rest of the satellite

stations, therefore we fed it through the AP satellite," Ayyoub said.

He told the Jordan Times that Prime Minister Abdur-Rauf S. Rawabdeh's government showed more leniency with the station adding that it and the JTV received memos last week from the Ministry of Information allowing the station to resume feeding its material through JTV.

Lawzi confirmed Al Jazirah's return to work saying an official letter of accreditation was not yet sent to the office but that "in principle" Al Jazirah was told to go ahead with its work.

"On Thursday we will meet with Al Jazirah to finalise procedures related to administrative and legal issues," he added.



Three children from the International Community School in Amman on Tuesday present a cheque for JD100 to Chris Larter of The Jordanian Society for the Protection of Animals. The money, to be used to support the work of the JSPA, was raised by parents and friends of the school at an end of term performance attended by HRH Princess Rahma Bint Hassan

Pharmacy student commits suicide

AMMAN (J.T.) — A second-year student committed suicide Wednesday by jumping from a three-storey building at Al Israa Private University after learning of his dismissal, according to official sources.

The student, Hussam Suleiman, a sophomore at the Faculty of Pharmacy, reportedly killed himself after the university administration discovered that he submitted forged transcripts when he

applied as a transfer student to the university, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported.

"When university officials confronted him, the student admitted in writing to forging the documents," Petra said.

"A specialised committee that examined his case recommended dismissing him on Wednesday morning, and said that the decision could have been appealed to the university council within 15 days,"

the report said.

The student locked himself in a laboratory of the pharmacy faculty and started throwing chemical bottles while wielding a knife.

Interior Minister Nayef Qadi, the university administrators and other officials tried to calm the student for nearly two hours, but he threw himself from the lab room window, the report said.

Officials told the Jordan Times Wednesday

evening that the student drank a chemical liquid then went to the third floor lab of the faculty and jumped from the window.

The student was rushed to a nearby hospital where he was declared dead one hour after his arrival.

A medical team, led by Mo'men Hadidi, head of the National Institute of Forensic Medicine, will perform an autopsy on Thursday.

Prime minister submits petition for public clemency of prisoners

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Prime Minister Abdur-Rauf S. Rawabdeh on Wednesday said he submitted a petition to His Majesty King Abdullah urging him to declare a public clemency for all prisoners, including convicted criminals.

Rawabdeh, who was speaking to Lower House members during its ordinary session, said the government was waiting the response of King Abdullah.

The premier noted that clemency can only be

granted when a clemency law is issued from the Parliament, following a Royal Decree.

Government officials told the Jordan Times that the King is considering the petition to declare "either a special or public clemency."

During the Lower House session, Deputy Abdullah Jazi urged King Abdullah to issue a public clemency to ensure the prisoners' release.

Head of the Public Freedoms Committee, Deputy Mohammad Azaydeh, told the Jordan

Times that almost 10,000 criminals are believed to be jailed in the Kingdom's prisons.

Azaydeh said clemency might be sought for one-third of them, especially women who served half of their jail terms. He said there are between 600 and 700 women prisoners.

"If His Majesty issues a public clemency, it will be up to the Parliament to fix the conditions for those who are eligible for the clemency," Azaydeh said.

He indicated that those convicted of murder and

"crimes of honour" could be eligible for clemency "if their cases were settled through tribal law."

Azaydeh noted that among the crimes that could be included in the clemency law are those who were jailed for issuing bounced cheques or those sent for jail for traffic violations.

"The Parliament will put the outlines for the those who are eligible for the clemency. We do not know when it might happen. We are waiting the King's answer to our request," he added.

By Amy Henderson

AMMAN — An international press freedoms group has resumed lobbying the government to safeguard free expression and adopt an approach towards the press that is "fully consistent with Jordan's obligations under international law."

In a letter addressed to Minister of Information Nasser Lawzi, congratulating him on his appointment as minister two weeks ago, the U.S.-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) said it was writing also to convey the organization's "concern with respect to various provisions of Jordan's 1998 Press and Publications Law," particularly its use to bring charges against Al Majd Editor-in-Chief Fahed Rimawi, who last month was detained for material published in the weekly newspaper that was considered offensive to the Royal family and security forces.

Rimawi was released after two days of detention but subsequently charged with violating Article 37 of the law.

The articles dictate a sweeping list of topics prohibited from publication in newspapers or any other medium in the country. Among the restric-

tions are information or material that disparages the King and the Royal family, harms the military or security forces, contains personal insult to the heads of Arab, Islamic or friendly states, harms national unity or incites strikes, sit-ins or public gatherings in violation of the law.

Rimawi wrote in articles appearing in late January and early February that His Royal Highness Prince Hassan, who was replaced as heir to the Throne by His Majesty the late King Hussein in January, laid his revolver down in front of the King and asked to be shot if King Hussein thought he was a traitor. In previous issues, Rimawi called for the resignation of then-Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh and his Cabinet.

The paper was ordered suspended by the Court of First Instance — a prerogative granted the court under Article 50 — on Feb. 13. The decision that was overturned by the Court of Appeals five days later.

Human Rights Watch Executive Director Hanny Megally wrote in the letter to Lawzi that "the broadly formulated language of these and other prohibited topics invites arbitrary interpretation by authorities and wrongly places

the burden on writers, editors and publishers to guess what is meant by these ambiguous terms."

Human Rights Watch said that Articles 37 and 50, along with Article 39 are inconsistent with international standards of free expression. (Article 39 bans the publication of information on any stage of an ongoing investigation into any case or crime or the deliberations of the court in a case under consideration before the final sentence is announced unless the publication of such information has been authorised by the public prosecutor or the court.)

"[These articles] deprive journalists and editors of the liberty to publish a diversity of news...and deprive the public of free access to information...from a diversity of sources," Megally wrote. "In cases of alleged violations of censorship rules, the imposition of news blackouts at the discretion of the authorities allows journalists to be investigated and prosecuted outside the view of the general public."

HRW said the law violates Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which the Kingdom is a state party. The former government

of Tarawneh, which initiated the proceedings against Rimawi, promised a "soft implementation" of the press law, which went into effect on Sept. 1, 1998. The case against Rimawi is the first and only legal case moved against a journalist since the enactment of the law.

HRW said that in its view, "the actions taken against Al Majd did not represent a lenient approach."

"These harsh measures violated the right to free expression granted in the ICCPR and which Jordan is obligated to uphold," the letter said.

The organisation appealed to the government to safeguard free expression...and adopt an approach "fully consistent with Jordan's obligations under international law."

"Until such time as the controversial provisions of the press law are amended or repealed, we appeal to [Nasser Lawzi] to refrain from the use of Article 37 to prosecute journalists for exercising the right to free expression and Article 50 to suspend the publication of newspapers and periodicals."

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

19:10News headlines
19:35Doc. — Perspective
20:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)
20:30 Programme on the late His Majesty King Hussein
21:00 Islamic History in Jordan
21:30On the Banks of Jordan
22:00News in English
22:10 Doc. — National Geographic
23:00News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)

PRAYER TIMES

04:22Fajr
05:39(Sunrise) Dhuha
11:44Dhuhr
15:09'Asr
17:49Maghrib
19:06Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweithfeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Lat-

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

19:10News headlines
19:35Doc. — Perspective
20:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)
20:30 Programme on the late His Majesty King Hussein
21:00 Islamic History in Jordan
21:30On the Banks of Jordan
22:00News in English
22:10 Doc. — National Geographic
23:00News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)

PRAYER TIMES

04:22Fajr
05:39(Sunrise) Dhuha
11:44Dhuhr
15:09'Asr
17:49Maghrib
19:06Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweithfeh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Lat-

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre.....4637111
Civil Defence Department.....5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue.....4630341
Civil Defence Emergency.....199
Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade.....4617101
Blood Bank.....4775121
Highway Police.....5343402
Traffic police.....4896390
Public Security Dept.....4630321
Hotel Complaints.....5605800
Price Complaints.....5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints.....487467
Amman Municipality Complaints.....4787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance).....121
Overseas Calls.....0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs.....4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs.....5661101
Jordan Television.....4773111
Radio Jordan.....4774111
Water Authority.....5680100
J. Electricity Authority.....5815615
Electric Power Co.....4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery.....5921199
The Islamic, Abdli.....5661317
Hussein Medical Centre.....5856856
Luzmila.....4630195
Khaldi Maternity.....4642816
Akheh Maternity.....4642412
Jabal Amman Maternity.....4642362

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700). Information on Royal Wings flights can be supplied on phone 4875201-5

20:25Tel Aviv (LY)
20:40Cairo (MS)
23:10Istanbul (TK)
00:25Moscow (SU)
01:15Amsterdam (KL)
04:10London (BA)
08:20Alexandria (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
For Thursday
08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
13:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
23:15 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

For Friday
08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
17:30 Gaza (arriving at QAIA) (RW)
18:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
18:40 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA) (RW)

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:30Beirut (RJ)
09:00 Amsterdam, New York (add) (RJ)
11:00Shannon, Chicago (RJ)
11:25Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:40 Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)
12:05Jeddah (add) (RJ)
12:05Kuwait (RJ)
12:10Paris (RJ)
12:15London (RJ)
12:15Athens (RJ)

Other Flights
13:15Riyadh (SV)
14:10Sharjah (AH)
14:45Doha (QR)
15:55Dubai (EK)
17:25Muscat, Dubai (GF)
18:40Beirut (ME)
19:05Paris (AF)

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
This information is supplied by

Other Flights

05:50Damascus, Frankfurt (LH)
14:45Riyadh (SV)
15:00Annabab, Algiers (AH)
15:35Doha (QR)
17:00Damascus, Dubai (EK)
18:15 Abu Dhabi, Muscat (GF)
20:00Beirut (ME)
20:50Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40Cairo (MS)
01:55Moscow (SU)
02:15Amsterdam (KL)
04:45Alexandria (BA)
06:00Istanbul (TK)
07:25Paris (AF)
09:05London (BA)

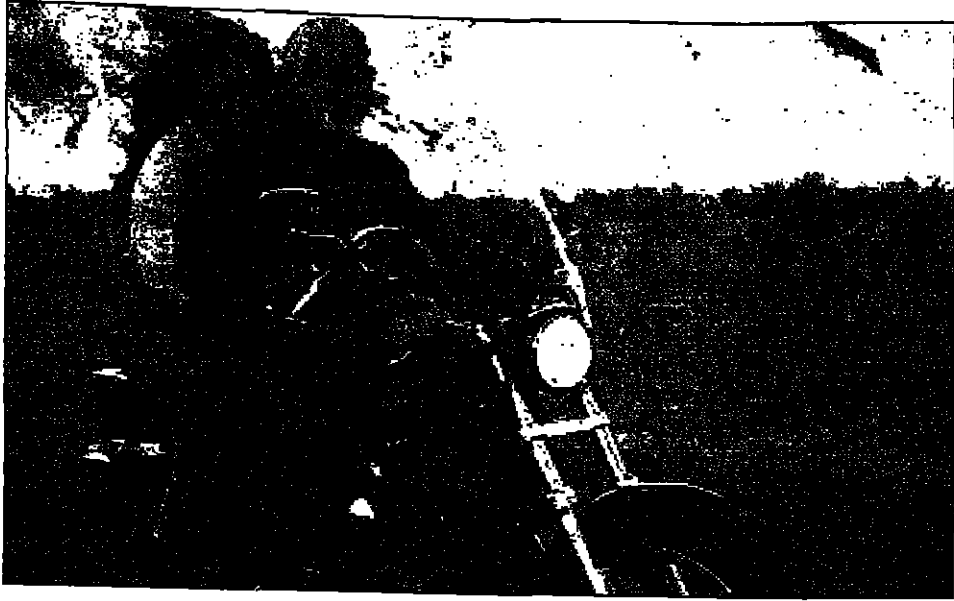
Royal Wings (RW) Flights

For Thursday
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
11:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)
19:45 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
20:15 Tel Aviv (from Marka Airport) (RW)

For Friday
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport) (RW)
13:30 Gaza (from Marka Airport) (RW)
16:15 Tel Aviv (from QAIA) (RW)
20:30 Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

Interview with Her Majesty Queen Noor

'He felt joy, pride and confidence in his Jordanian family'



By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — Her Majesty Queen Noor sees the establishment of the King Hussein Foundation as an opportunity to work towards a better future and thus fulfil the dream of the late King Hussein for a peaceful and prosperous Jordan.

Queen Noor said that she looked forward to working closely with His Majesty King Abdullah, the Royal family and the larger Jordanian family in fulfilling the late King's legacy through the King Hussein Foundation, which King Abdullah yesterday entrusted her with establishing and heading.

"This will be a national and international institution dedicated to sustaining and giving a dynamic life to His Majesty's [the late King Hussein] vision and his message of humanity, compassion, humility, peace, and progress in areas that were of particular

importance to him," Queen Noor told the Jordan Times Wednesday.

The institution will provide an open forum for Jordanians and the international community to support and participate in political, economic and social efforts "carried out by the late King, the Queen said.

"There should be an institution where Jordanians and the international community could give an enduring life to his [King Hussein's] dreams, his vision and most important his humanitarian spirit."

Among the foundation's aims is the hope for the development of education, providing incentives, in addition to offering health care services. King Hussein's battle with non-Hodgkins lymphoma had intensified the interest of both Their Majesties in helping to find a cure for cancer.

"Just as this foundation will support education and opportunities for students to develop

their abilities to serve the country, I'm sure there will be an aspect to support efforts to improve and make available to

'Remember him with a smile and a determination to contribute...to the welfare of our entire family before our own self interests'

those in need of medical services not only for cancer, but medicine in general," Queen Noor stressed.

One of King Hussein's main goals was to develop Jordan's health care sector into a leading medical hub in the Middle East.

The King Hussein Foundation, said the Queen, will cooperate with other established institutions in the coun-

try to advance their efforts, awareness and promote programmes that will reach as many people as possible.

She pointed out that "the efforts of this foundation should complement and support the efforts of the government and other institutions in the country to carry on the work that His Majesty King Hussein began and gave so much of his heart and soul and body to."

The late King has been described as a statesman of vision and courage. His courage and faith were Queen Noor's source of inspiration in her perseverance and steadfastness at the onset and throughout the most daunting challenge of their 20-year marriage.

"Our life [has always] been very much a roller-coaster of great expectations and dashed hopes and it taught us the importance of patience and faith...the last challenge we faced was unique for us encompassing different aspects of our life together," the Queen recalled.

She explained that not only were the very personal, political and spiritual facets of their lives intensified at the time of the King's seven-month fight against cancer, but also "his work for peace and his constant unending commitment to serve Jordan for the present and the future were part of every moment of that time we were struggling."

The daughter of an Arab-American family, Queen Noor 47, obtained a degree in architecture and urban planning from Princeton University. She met the late King when she began working in the region in the field of research and planning.

Of the time at Mayo Clinic, Queen Noor said, "We always concentrated on the future, devoted all our energies to the

future hoping that through the suffering we might be contributing to more scientific knowledge for others fighting the disease. There was useful information that came out of this process as some of it was experimental."

The Queen recalled the late King's complete commitment to the welfare and service of others which overrode his own interests.

"He was always willing to take risks and make sacrifices for the love of his people. All this love was felt, shared and given back to him by our Jordanian family, which was a particular joy for him when we returned on Jan. 19," she said. "All throughout the King had felt such joy and pride and confidence in the future of his Jordanian family which was a source of peace and hope for him until the very end."

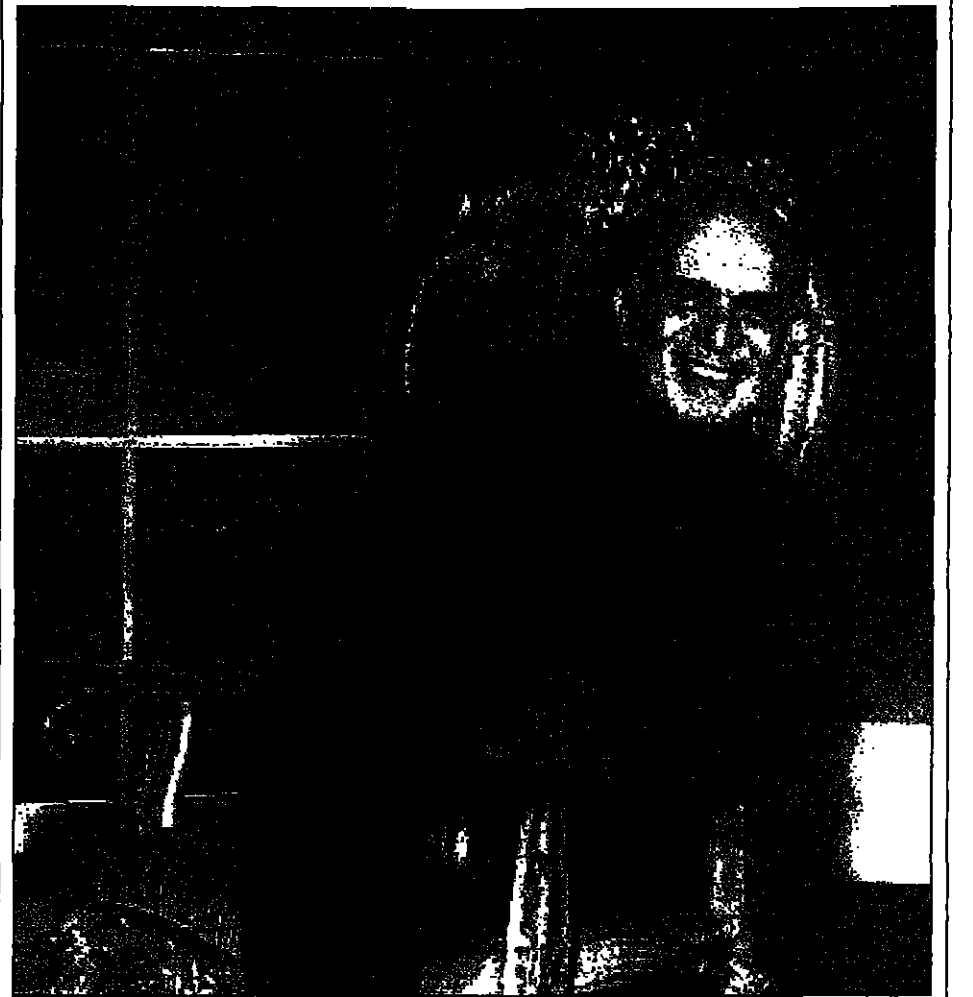
Queen Noor emphasised that the best tribute to the late King for each of us would be to remember him "with a smile and a determination to contribute from our hearts to the welfare of our entire family before our own self interests."

The Queen said that she had been deeply moved by the wide range of Jordanians who have been such a source of comfort and who have urged her to continue the work she has done with and for the King. The rest of her life will be dedicated to this, she said.

We should see ourselves, the Queen said, as members of a family that "has a great deal to offer and the potential to make humanitarian and other contributions within the region and the world."

King Hussein died on February 7, 1999 at the age of 63. Jordan will mark the end of the 40-day national mourning period with prayers in the Kingdom's mosques and churches.

Jordan remembers King Hussein at end of 40-day mourning



By Caroline Faraj

AMMAN — Jordanians today mark the end of 40 days of official mourning since the passing away of His Majesty King Hussein, but few have been able to overcome their shock and sorrow over his death.

However, many have vowed to continue his legacy and regard His Majesty King Abdullah as an extension of the policies of the late Monarch, who died Feb. 7 after losing a seven-month battle with cancer.

"I still cannot believe that he died," said Farah Salem, one of several students praying at the King's grave inside the Royal Palace compound where officials have plans to build a mausoleum.

"We will never be able to forget him. He was a father, a brother and a leader and whatever you do or you look at, you cannot but feel him and see the many symbols of development and nation-building he left for his country," said a school teacher accompanying Salem.

The National Aid Fund announced it will distribute JD100,000 to poor families.

"Helping the poor has been always one of the main deeds that King Hussein urged us to do," one official told the Jordan Times. "And we know this will make him happy."

The NAF plans to dis-

tribute food sachets and other donations as part of the nationwide campaign. Scores of sheep will be slaughtered in a traditional sign of sacrifice, and the meat will be given to the needy.

Other Jordanians are marking the end of the official mourning period by holding gatherings to express their love and to pay tribute to the late King Hussein.

Circassians, Palestinian refugees, children and university students have held eulogies around Jordan.

Jordanian expatriate and foreigners across the globe are also sharing the sorrow of Jordanians.

Royal Court officials said the court has received millions of letters, cables and e-mails of condolence.

"You cannot imagine the number of letters and e-mails that we have received from everybody," one official said.

A documentary film about the life of King Hussein will be aired on Jordan Television late on Thursday.

Municipal elections to proceed under 1955 law, municipal merger before parliamentary committee

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment on Wednesday soothed Islamists' fears that the government would redesign municipalities ahead of the July 14 elections saying the vote will be held under the current law.

Officials at the ministry said elections will take place in the 305 municipalities listed in the 1955 law as amended in 1995, since long-time plans to merge the existing councils into around 170 new municipalities will require lengthy implementation procedures.

"The plan [to merge the municipalities] is currently before a specialised parliamentary committee, and it will follow the regular legislative procedures," said an official, asking not to be named.

"It will not become law before [this July's] elections," he added.

The Islamic Action Front announced last month that it will take part in the municipal elections, but warned the government against introducing any amendments to the current legislation with the specific aim to reduce its repre-

sentation in the city councils.

"We hope to hear from the government soon that [municipal] elections will be held on time and under the current law, although we have great reservations on it," said an IAF statement on Feb. 27.

The IAF, the political arm of the Muslim Brotherhood, has long criticised the current legislation, especially the 1995 amendments under which the mayor and half of the Amman Municipality Council's 40 members are appointed by the Council of Ministers.

"The current law does reflect neither the level of democracy Jordanians aspire to nor their political maturity, because it deprives Amman citizens of the right to elect their mayor and half their municipal council's members," the statement said.

The IAF followed its mother organisation in the historic boycott of the November 1997 general elections — a move that many inside and outside the party came to regret — after a feud with the government over the current general elections law.

Party sources have admitted that the decision to participate in the

upcoming local elections stemmed from the party's need to strengthen its grassroots and test a following that official IAF reports say has decreased in the past months.

Though it remains Jordan's biggest party, the IAF has been said to have lost some of its once iron grip on its traditional strongholds, namely Palestinian refugee camps, densely-populated urban suburbs, and other underprivileged areas.

Analysts have said a decrease in membership may be a result of both general apathy and disenchantment towards political parties and a more specific loss of exposure and influence in many public institutions due to the elections boycott.

One official at the municipal and rural affairs ministry told the Jordan Times on Wednesday that elections campaigning in the municipalities will start one week before the elections and will last for five days, according to the law.

Voting should take place in one day, but some polling stations may stay open for an additional day if the quorum of 51 per cent of registered voters has not been achieved by the end of the first voting

day.

In the last 1995 elections, which witnessed a national turn-out of 72 per cent and the election of one woman as mayor, polling stations in the populous Ruseifa municipality, northeast of Amman, stayed open an additional day.

Voting age in municipal elections is 19, one year more than in parliamentary elections, and the family book is used as identification at polling stations.

Contrary to controversial stipulations in the general elections law, according to which voters can register in any district they please, citizens must elect in the municipality of their residence, according to the municipalities election law.

The number of seats in each municipal council ranges from six to 12, according to the size of the population. Municipal councils have jurisdiction over infrastructure projects within their boundaries, and administer yearly budgets fixed by the government. The biggest budget for this year, JD10 million, was allocated to the municipality of Zarqa, one of the most populous areas in the Kingdom.

UNRWA's 20,000 workers threaten to strike

By Hind-Lara Mango

AMMAN — Some 20,000 employees of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency are threatening to launch a series of strikes soon if UNRWA does not heed long-time demands for wage increases and better working conditions.

"If we do not receive a positive response within two weeks, we will start with strikes, first at the level of the three committees (representing staff) and then all the staff members," UNRWA staff representatives said in a letter sent to the agency's Director General Peter Hansen.

The letter was sent on Tuesday to the debt-ridden agency that offers education, health and relief services to nearly 3.5 million Palestinians, made refugees during the 1948 and 1967 Arab-Israeli wars. A copy of the letter was made available to the Jordan Times on Wednesday.

Representatives of the agency's 20,000 employees in Jordan said they had to consider stepped-up measures of protests after waiting for years to see some tangible improvements, not just promises.

"Lack of a health insurance scheme, end-of-service compensation, early retirement, and university scholarships for children of staff, have made our working con-

ditions intolerable," they said.

Representatives of UNRWA's teacher, service, and labour committees accused Hansen of making "false and empty promises as we have not seen a minimum of our (past) demands resolved, thus continuing an endless battle which has been going on for the past five years," they added.

UNRWA officials in Amman were not immediately available for comment. Hansen intervened personally six months ago to avert a decision by UNRWA staff to stage an open-ended strike across UNRWA's area of operations — in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip — to push for better working conditions and clearer remuneration.

"He [Hansen] then met with the executive staff committee and promised to resolve all pending issues...but nothing, not even the minimum of what was promised, has been realised," one staff representative told the Jordan Times.

UNRWA staff have been demanding an adjustment to their salaries on grounds they "are not enough to see us through the month."

UNRWA suffers from a deficit of around \$60 million in this year's \$350 million budget forcing it to make cuts in its services, in existence since after the 1948

Arab-Israeli war which led to the creation of Israel on parts of British-mandated Palestine.

Jordan, host to 40 per cent of the overall refugee population, spends \$380 million a year on infrastructure and other services in 13 refugee camps across Jordan.

"During the past three years, we have seen nothing save for cuts," they said in their letter. "While (salary) increments reached 60 per cent for senior managers, the pay of the majority of the agency's workers has remained unchanged for the past five years."

Staff have always perceived regulations governing their work "as ambiguous," as they are not considered United Nations employees and cannot receive the relatively lucrative packages offered to employees of other U.N. agencies.

They also do not receive the same benefits as government employees.

"If we are not considered U.N. staff, then under which category do we fall? Which organisation are we to follow and which laws are we to apply?" asked one staff representative.

Gunnar Lofberg, director of UNRWA operations in Jordan, said area staff are paid according to government salaries.

UNRWA was forced to adopt a series of austerity measures over the past five

years, including a three-year employment policy which terminates the employees term at the end of the contract. More and more employees are now being hired on a daily basis, staff say.

"This policy only serves to destroy the agency's infrastructure and create instability for staff reflecting negatively on the quality of services given to refugees."

Cost-slashing measures have included a 20 per cent cut on international staff and cuts in hospitalisation subsidies — now refugees are only subsidised at government hospitals.

The refugee population growing at 3.5 per cent annually is placing massive strains on the agency's services resulting in understaffed schools and overworked doctors.

The U.N. General Assembly voted four months ago to extend the agency's mandate for another three years.

Staff demands concluded their letter with a call for the centralisation of decision-making in the agency and expanding the authorities of the director of operations.

"Waiting for a decision on a simple matter to be taken from Gaza (UNRWA headquarters) only serves to make the decision-making process unstable, uncomfortable and monotonous," they said.

Disgraced EU Commission wants quick exit

BRUSSELS (R) — The European Union's scandal-tarred executive urged member states Wednesday to move swiftly to name a new team, a day after it resigned amid allegations of corruption and mismanagement.

The 20-strong European commission said in a brief statement it would continue in a caretaker capacity, managing day-to-day affairs but not putting forward any new policy initiatives.

The EU's 15 member states scrambled to find consensus on a solution to the crisis.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, whose country holds the rotating EU presidency, continued a whirlwind tour of capitals, sounding out fellow leaders in Vienna, Athens, Rome and Lisbon.

While some want the disgraced commission replaced at once, French European Affairs Minister Pierre Moscovici said the appointment of a new executive should wait until after European parliament elections in June.

There are concerns that EU leaders may get bogged down in trying to solve the commission crisis at a summit in Berlin next week

where they should be busy resolving a row over EU funding.

Clearly finding its position untenable, however, the outgoing commission wants to leave as soon as possible.

"We have resigned and we have neither the desire nor intention to stay in office longer than necessary," it said in a statement read to reporters by a spokeswoman.

The lame duck commission took just one action at its weekly meeting Wednesday, approving a proposal to create a new fraud office to clean up the EU civil service.

The executive quit Tuesday after a group of independent experts accused it of turning a blind eye to fraud and cronyism and of losing control of the Brussels administration.

Since then, the commission, particularly its president, Jacques Santer, has come under intense pressure to leave.

Misjudging the mood Tuesday, Santer insisted he personally was "whiter than white" and had no reason to go.

Schröder was quick to make clear there could be no renewal of santer's mandate. "One can rule that



European Research Commissioner Edith Cresson (left) chats with European Development Commissioner Joao de Deus Pinheiro prior to the weekly commission meeting in Brussels Wednesday. Demands for the instant departure of the disgraced European Commission mounted Wednesday as Brussels attempted to carry on business as usual despite the resignation of the executive (Reuters photo)

out," he told reporters in Vienna where he met his Austrian counterpart, Viktor Klima.

Europe's media have already begun speculating on who may succeed the hapless Santer, with NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana and former Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi heading an unofficial shortlist.

A NATO official said, however, that Solana, a former Spanish foreign minister, was too busy to be thinking about a new job.

"The secretary-general at

the moment has a full-time job at NATO ... with the Kosovo crisis now reaching the critical stage.

He really, really, really doesn't have time to think about other things," the official told reporters.

EU leaders may opt instead to appoint a caretaker leader — possibly commission Vice President Sir Leon Brittan — to steer an interim commission, a mix of new faces and current members, through until the end of the year while they prepare a new team.

In December, the European Parliament, newly empowered by the Amsterdam treaty due to come into force in the summer, would vote on a new commission based largely on the caretaker team.

The problem remains of what to do with former French Prime Minister Edith Cresson, regarded by many as the unrepentant villain of the piece.

France would be reluctant to renominate her even in a caretaker role, yet would not want to publicly shame her and make her a scape-

goat for the commission's demise.

Fanning the flames of media outrage, the former education commissioner alleged that the expert report which slammed her for cronyism had been "tampered with" to make her look bad.

The independent inquiry, conducted by a panel of five legal and auditing experts, singled out Cresson in a 144-page report accusing the executive of losing control of its 19,000 staff and turning a blind eye to irregularities.

'Serbs won't budge on Kosovo talks'

PARIS (AFP) — Serb negotiators Wednesday stubbornly refused to budge on a peace plan for Kosovo, as a village massacre that was a trigger for the peace process was deemed "a crime against humanity."

"There is no movement whatsoever," a European diplomat told AFP as day three of renewed peace talks unfolded in the French capital. "We're just going around in circles."

In Kosovo's capital Pristina, a team of Finnish forensic experts declared that the mass killing of 45 ethnic Albanians in January in the Kosovo village of Racak was indeed "a crime against humanity."

But the Finns, who carried out post-mortems on 40 of the dead, were unable to reach an opinion on how exactly they were slain, said Helena Ranta, head of the forensic team.

Many of the victims had been found with bullet wounds in the back of the head — leading the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) chief of mission in Kosovo, William Walker, to point an accusing finger at Serb security forces.

Racak was one of the worst atrocities of the year-long fight by Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority for self-rule from Belgrade, and led directly to 17 days of peace talks at Rambouillet chateau near Paris last month.

Those negotiations produced an 82-page draft accord that the ethnic Albanians formally agreed to Monday when round two of talks opened, but which diplomats say the Serb side now is trying to rewrite.

In Kosovo itself, Serbian officials said the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) clashed Wednesday with Yugoslav border guards near the mountainous frontier with Albania.

"Terrorists" attacked the border guards at around 4:00 a.m. (0300 GMT) near Djakovica, a town 10 kilometres from the border, said the Serb-run media centre in Pristina.

Yugoslav troops repulsed the attack, it said, adding that there were no casualties among security forces.

Belgrade regularly refers to the KLA as "terrorists." The guerrillas are known to smuggle weapons regularly into Kosovo via mountain trails from remote villages inside Albania.

As he arrived Wednesday at the talks' venue, Serb President Milan Milutinovic accused the international community of "fraud" by trying to get Belgrade to accept a deal it did not want.

Asked how long the talks could go on, he replied: "Who knows? I'm not the master of the game. The others are."

By "others" he meant the

United States and European Union (EU), who are threatening NATO air strikes if Belgrade refuses to sign the draft accord and if the conflict escalates.

"Nobody wants air strikes, but if this is the only way to get Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic (the Serbs' ultimate leader) to accept peace, then we would go for it," a diplomat said.

But there are disturbing signs that Milosevic was gearing for more war in the province.

U.S. Defence Department spokesman Kenneth Bacon said Belgrade was moving armour and troops to Kosovo's border with Macedonia, apparently in response to a buildup there of NATO forces that would be part of a Kosovo peace-keeping operation.

The Yugoslav army has also been moving surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft guns around Serbia, Bacon said.

"They certainly are bracing for war but they continue to participate in the talks," he said.

U.S. General Wesley Clark, supreme commander of NATO forces in Europe, told British radio that the "activation order" for NATO action against Serbia "remains in effect."

"The aircraft are there, the plans are ready, we know what we're doing, we are well trained," he said.

By "others" he meant the

China releases dissidents ahead of U.N. human rights session

BEIJING (AFP) — China has released a handful of dissidents as it fights a new campaign to head off a hostile motion at the annual session of the U.N. Human Rights Commission.

China is again coming under international pressure over rights violations. A European Union delegation left Beijing Wednesday to report back on talks with Chinese officials on human rights.

A United Nations team also held talks in Beijing Wednesday.

But Huang Heqing, a dissident based in the eastern city of Hangzhou, was released Monday after spending four months in police custody, according to the Hong Kong-based Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China.

Huang was arrested on Nov. 2, at the same time as Wang Youcai, a founding member of the China Democracy Party (CDP), who was later sentenced to 11 years in prison on charges of subversion.

Wang Jinbo and Lai Jinbiao, two other dissidents detained in Hangzhou in past weeks, were also released Monday evening, the rights group reported in a statement.

But Frank Lu, spokesman for the Information Centre, called on Western countries "not to be fooled by ploys used by the Chinese

authorities in the lead up to the meeting of the U.N. Human Rights Commission."

The New York-based Human Rights in China (HRIC) Wednesday reported that Fang Yue, a former Communist Party official held by police since last July, is to be formally charged and tried.

Fang, 44, published works urging political reforms in early 1998. He was a close associate of Shi Binhai, a reformist Beijing-based journalist who has been detained without charge since last summer.

The families of Fang, Shi and Huang were given no information by the authorities about the whereabouts or condition of the detained men.

European Union foreign ministers will decide Monday, after getting a report from the delegation, whether to back a motion condemning human rights violations in China, the same day that the annual U.N. session is set to open in Geneva.

The session runs from March 22 to April 30.

Human rights organisations have called on the European nations to support a resolution denouncing the Chinese regime following heavy prison sentences handed down to three CDP members at the end of December.

After attempting in vain to get a resolution passed at

the U.N. commission each year after the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, the EU switched tactics last year, choosing instead to start a rights dialogue with Beijing.

The United States adopted a similar position, citing improvements in China's record, but has since criticised the renewed crack-down on political dissent.

The U.S. Congress last week unanimously passed a non-binding motion urging the Clinton administration to renew support for a censure motion against China.

A team of U.N. human rights commissioners was also received Wednesday in Beijing.

China's foreign ministry, when questioned by AFP, stressed that the U.N. mission, which will leave Beijing just before the opening of the Geneva session, was not connected with fears that a censure motion would be tabled against China.

The talks reportedly focused on the two international covenants signed by China in 1997 and 1998, both of which have yet to be ratified by parliament.

Beijing has argued that it needs more time to harmonise its existing laws and legislation with provisions in both the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Latvians turn increasingly sceptical of European Union

RIGA (AFP) — Support for joining the European Union has dropped sharply in Latvia, with only about one-third of Latvians ready to vote for membership if a referendum were held now, according to a new poll. Although joining the EU is the Baltic country's top foreign policy goal, only 36.6 per cent of respondents would have voted in favour of EU membership the February poll showed — a drop of 10 per cent from a November poll. A total of 30.4 per cent were ready to vote against joining the EU. One-third of Latvians remain undecided. "Many Latvians feel that we are still not ready to join the EU yet," said a spokeswoman for Latvia's European Integration Bureau. Latvia had hoped to get promoted out of the second group of EU candidate countries at the EU summit in Vienna last December and receive an invitation to begin membership talks. But the debate on restructuring EU finances led the European Commission to recommend putting off a decision regarding Latvia for one year. The strongest EU supporters are young people under 25, urban residents, people with higher education and higher income levels.

Africa forest conservation summit opens in Cameroon

YAOUNDE (AFP) — African leaders Wednesday began a summit here on saving vast tropical forests across the centre of the continent, still largely unscathed by loggers, and on viable management methods. The day-long summit has been jointly organised by host country Cameroon and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) and is due to lead to a Yaounde declaration aimed at protecting Africa's forests before it is too late. A WWF statement said participants were to "commit themselves to protecting the great wooded stretches of the Congo basin that are the (world's) largest forest ecosystem after Amazonia". Present at the summit are presidents Paul Biya of Cameroon, Felix-Ange Patasse of the Central African Republic and Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea, while the WWF said that Gabon was represented by its vice-president. Congo's leader was still to turn up. Experts from the WWF, whose honorary president is Prince Philip of the United Kingdom, have stressed that the forests of the four Congo basins — Dja in Cameroon, Mambili in Congo, Ivindo-Djoua in Gabon and Sangha in the Central African Republic — are "the lungs of the planet". These areas now constitute the main relatively unscathed dense and humid forest land on earth after massive logging in the Amazon, "hence the need to safeguard them," the fund stated. Prince Philip gave a speech to open the Yaounde summit, which was also being attended by numerous experts from the United Nations, the World Bank, the European Union and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU).

FBI to join Sarajevo car bombing investigation

SARAJEVO (AFP) — United States FBI experts arrived in Sarajevo Tuesday and more were expected later Wednesday to assist local police investigating the car bomb explosion that left a top Bosnian Croat politician gravely wounded, the American embassy said here. "The Bosnian government asked for help, so we have brought in the FBI. They are here to assist local police," embassy spokesman Dale Backer said. "The United States regards such terrorism as an assault on democracy," an embassy statement said here Tuesday. Jozo Leutar, 45, interior deputy minister of the Muslim-Croat Federation, suffered severe head injuries when his car blew up Tuesday as he was being driven down one of the capital's main streets. Leutar's condition was "stable, slightly better," Wednesday morning, after he had undergone four operations Tuesday, to remove a piece of shrapnel which penetrated his skull and lodged in his brain, the doctors said. According to U.N. police, the other two people in the car were slightly injured. Stjepan Pocrnja, a local interior ministry official, said a bomb had been placed underneath Leutar's official car and was probably detonated by remote control. Leutar, a former police employee, has been deputy interior minister since 1996.

9-year-old beaten to death by friends

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Eight boys aged between six and 13 years were arrested in South Africa's Mpumalanga province after allegedly beating their nine-year-old friend to death, police said Wednesday. Police spokesman Captain Izak van Zyl said the boys from Ekulindeni township allegedly killed Thamsanqa Nkambule Tuesday afternoon after accusing him of stealing an identity document and other items. "The boys took him to one of their houses at about 5:00 p.m. and then hit him with sticks until he passed out," Van Zyl said. The eight boys then went to the police station to report a case of theft against their victim. When police went to investigate they found Nkambule's swollen, bloodied body on a bed with an identity document belonging to a parent of one of the suspects in his pocket. Van Zyl told AFP. All eight boys were arrested after they confessed to the police that they beat Nkambule. A murder docket has been opened against the boys, who have been released into the care of their parents. They are expected to appear in court later this week.

'Wanted models, skinny women need not apply'

MADRID (R) — Models who want to strut the catwalks of Barcelona next year face a new challenge — fatten up or they may be out of a job. The Salon Gaudi in Barcelona, one of Spain's most prestigious fashion shows, has announced that next year it will not accept models who wear less than a Spanish size 40, local media reported Wednesday. That is the equivalent of a U.S. size eight or a British size 10 dress. The step has been taken to try to counter the idea that only thin people are beautiful. "I am aware that if we promote the image of skinny women we are hurting our young people, and I am against that," Paco Flaqué, director of Salon Gaudi, was quoted by El Mundo newspaper as saying. Flaqué told Europa Press News agency the average size of models appearing for catwalk try-out 10 years ago was 40-42. That has dropped to 38-40 because of the pressure to lose weight. Gaudi's move sparked an immediate outcry, with thin people. Salon Gaudi's competitor in Madrid, the Pusarela Cibeles, issued a communiqué on Europa Press saying it had no limits on the size of its models, although it noted most were between sizes 38 and 40.

One ocean away from round-the-world first, balloonists head to Atlantic

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — Swiss balloonist Bertrand Piccard and his co-pilot Brian Jones soared Wednesday towards the last great feat of the Millennium — to be the first to circumnavigate the globe in a balloon.

With one more ocean to cross after finishing the hardest stretch, the record-setting team headed toward the Gulf of Mexico and should be near Jamaica around 0600 GMT Thursday, support staff said.

Meteorologists were still setting the final route, over the Atlantic.

By Saturday, the balloon should have officially accomplished its world tour at the Mauritanian city

of Bir Boghran, if easterly winds permit.

The pair plan to touch down at the foot of the pyramids in Egypt after crossing North Africa.

"They have six days of fuel left, which is largely sufficient to reach Egypt," an expedition spokesman, Gerard Sermer, said in Geneva.

"All winds are favourable, regular communications with the team are still possible after the black hole over the Pacific," Sermer added.

In an interview carried out through control headquarters Tuesday, Piccard said only bad luck could scuttle the venture at this stage. "Now we tell ourselves: hopefully our

speed will be fast enough so as to reach Europe before we run out of propane."

Having clocked more than 31,000 kilometres since leaving the Swiss Alps on March 1, organisers said, the two balloonists have set a world distance record, though it has yet to be officially recognised.

The current official distance record is of 22,910 kilometres — a stretch the U.S. balloonist Steve Fossett beat with his 24,466-kilometre journey.

When they reached the Mexican coast Tuesday night, the Anglo-Swiss duo also became the first balloonists to cross the Pacific during a non-stop,

round-the-world attempt.

Other balloons have conquered the Pacific, but only those that left directly from South Korea or Japan and timed departures to benefit from optimal weather.

Piccard and Jones took six days and 16 hours to cross the Pacific, considered the most perilous stretch of the journey.

"So that little puddle was what they call the Pacific," Jones joked in a conversation with the Geneva control centre.

"It's really nice to see so many folks following our little jaunt," he added.

Piccard, a Swiss psychiatrist, should be in familiar territory for the final stretch, as he has already

piloted a balloon over the Atlantic in 1992.

Early Wednesday, the Breitling was soaring at an altitude of 10,000-11,000 metres and at a speed of about 100 kilometres per hour. It slowed down significantly after it abandoned the jet stream winds that propelled it across the Pacific.

Piccard and Jones took turns piloting the craft and sleeping, and were in regular contact with their headquarters in Geneva.

Spokeswoman Patricia Fournier said the two were in top form. "They've got into a good rhythm, their morale is high, and they get along extremely well," she said in a phone call from Geneva.

In case things go awry, the Breitling pair are equipped with a kit containing parachutes, inflatable dinghies, life jackets, survival wet suits and food for several days.

There is also an emergency dropping system to separate the gondola from the helium envelope.

Britons Andy Elson and Colin Prescott were plucked from the Pacific Ocean near Japan a week ago after poor weather and heavy snow forced them to ditch their round-the-world balloon attempt.

British tycoon Richard Branson's attempt to be the first to circle the world in a balloon ended in the Pacific off Hawaii on Dec. 25.



Former anti-apartheid cleric Allan Boesak, accompanied by his wife Elna, is surrounded by supporters as he leaves court after being found guilty of charges of misappropriation of donor funds (Reuters photo)

Boesak, from anti-apartheid icon to common criminal

CAPE TOWN (AFP) — From an icon of the anti-apartheid struggle to common criminal found guilty of stealing money from victims of apartheid, Allan Boesak's fall from grace has been swift and painful. Boesak, 53, was convicted in the High Court here Wednesday on three counts of theft and one of fraud involving money donated by Scandinavian donor agencies and by U.S. singer Paul Simon to his Foundation for Peace and Justice (FPJ) charity between 1988 and 1994. After being pronounced guilty, Boesak said he had no comment. For once the shrill voice which in the mid-1980s inspired thousands, if not millions, to resist the apartheid government remained silent. Boesak shot to prominence in the early 1980s, when he headed the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in Bellville, near Cape Town, using the

pulpit to denounce the injustices of apartheid. In 1982, the fiery orator gained international recognition when he was appointed president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, comprising non-traditional, mainly black, churches around the world. Travelling widely, he preached the anti-apartheid message in churches wherever he went, gaining favour in the process with Nelson Mandela's then-banned African National Congress (ANC), and with Mandela himself, who at the time was still in prison. When the United Democratic Front (UDF) — an umbrella body of anti-apartheid movements — was formed in Cape Town 1983, Boesak was elected one of the many leaders, often crossing swords with the apartheid authorities. In the same year he per-

sued his Bellville church to form the FPJ, with the aim of aiding victims of apartheid. Backed by his anti-apartheid credentials, Boesak persuaded foreign donor agencies to pour millions of rand (dollars) into the FPJ for use to develop housing schemes and educational programmes and to care for children left orphans through the actions of the apartheid authorities. After South Africa's historic first all-race elections in 1994, Boesak was appointed finance minister in the Western Cape provincial government and, in 1995, as South Africa's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva. By then, however, Scandinavian churches were questioning how their donations were being used by Boesak and demanded an inquiry. Mandela was forced to cancel Boesak's U.N. appointment.

The South African police inquiry culminated in Wednesday's conviction in the Cape High Court. Judge John Foxcroft said in his judgement that 1990 appeared to have been a "watershed year" for Boesak in that he divorced his first wife and married his current wife Elna, a former television presenter; he resigned as president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches; and his lifestyle changed to one of expensive cars and luxury homes. Boesak, the judge said, also found he was forced to pay the huge debts Elna brought into the marriage. He began dipping into donor money. The judge's words will find resonance with many of Boesak's supporters who blame Elna for changing their hero from a humble churchman to a man with a high-flying, fast-spending lifestyle.

U.S., North Korea defuse nuclear standoff, problems remain

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A new U.S.-North Korean accord allowing U.S. inspections of a suspected North Korean nuclear weapons site leaves major problems unresolved and has already drawn fire from Congress. Most immediately, U.S. officials worry about Pyongyang's ballistic missile programme and suspect the tightly closed country may be concealing other aspects of a nuclear arms programme at other installations, experts say. Pyongyang stunned Washington and its allies last August 31 by testing a three-stage missile far more advanced than anything U.S. intelligence had believed it was capable of producing. And while the deal announced Tuesday envisages further bilateral talks on North Korea's missile programme, in Pyongyang beginning March 29, it does not address missile testing — which clearly worries U.S. legislators. At worst, some analysts and officials believe, North Korea could use the time it bought with Tuesday's agreement to continue developing various weapons of mass destruction and then use them to bargain for more aid.

Under the terms announced Tuesday in New York, North Korea will permit multiple U.S. inspections of the suspect site at Kumchangri, near its declared nuclear weapons facility at Yongbyon. The United States will, for its part, provide additional food aid to North Korea through the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP). Washington is already Pyongyang's single largest food donor through the WFP. It should also now be able to keep legislators from cutting off U.S. heavy fuel oil shipments promised under a 1994 deal that froze Pyongyang's declared nuclear programme and sidestepped a military confrontation. But Republican legislators and some analysts fear the pattern of U.S. aid in response to North Korean threats has established a dangerous precedent and set the stage for further brinkmanship in the not-so-distant future. In a statement, Representative Benjamin Gilman, a Republican from New York and chairman of

the House International Relations Committee, warned late Tuesday of possible showdowns to come. "It looks like we are pouring good U.S. food aid down a North Korean hole. I am also worried about all of the other North Korean underground facilities we know are dug throughout the country," Gilman said. "This agreement smacks of a 'food for access' deal which could lead to further provocative actions on the part of the North Koreans to extort future concessions from the United States," he added. "I worry that the North Koreans and other rogue nations will begin charging the United States for ensuring their compliance with their international agreements," Gilman said. The Washington Post quoted Senator John McCain, Republican from Arizona and a likely presidential candidate, as saying he feared a pattern "of (U.S.) material concessions ... in exchange for vaguely worded commitments that the North Koreans have no intention of keeping." The Republican-run Congress months ago

declared open season on President Bill Clinton's North Korea policy, and supporters inside and outside the government have given them plenty of ammunition. Just last week, the U.S. special coordinator for North Korea, former defence secretary William Perry, warned that Pyongyang "is moving toward nuclear weapons as well as the ballistic missiles that can carry these weapons." "That is putting it into a position of confrontation with the United States," said Perry, who is expected to make broad policy recommendations to Clinton within weeks. CIA Director George Tenet also recently told Congress that Pyongyang may soon develop a ballistic missile able to reach the United States and suggested that widespread hunger and instability make the government uniquely unpredictable. Administration officials counter that engaging Pyongyang — keeping its officials talking and giving them something to lose if they behave aggressively — remains preferable to the alternative.

Apple computer makes blueprints to software publicly available

CUPERTINO, California (AP) — Apple Computer Inc. will become the first major computer company to release its operating system's programming secrets to software developers around the world. Apple's move to make its source code available is limited to its software that runs central computers. At least for now, it will continue to keep secret its operating system for the Macintosh personal computer. Nevertheless, the announcement gives a big push to a movement to use the Internet for enlisting volunteer programmers and speeding software development. The so-called "open

source" method also is used for Netscape's browser software and the Linux operating system for business computers. In contrast, companies such as Microsoft Corp. and Sun Microsystems Inc. jealously guard blueprints to their software to surprise rivals with improved features. At Tuesday's press conference announcing the source code availability, Apple interim CEO Steve Jobs also unveiled a \$499 operating system, called the Mac OS X Server, for use by schools, small and medium businesses and departments within larger companies. The source code package

behind the system is dubbed "Darwin," said Jobs, because "it's about evolution." Source codes are the typed instructions that people create directing computers to execute programmes. The system will work on most new Apple computers, but is being packaged with the new Macintosh server G3, a \$4,999 computer for people who want to link many computers together. Eric Raymond, president of a group of programmers called The Open Source Initiative, said that Apple's decision to share its newest code will "shake up the computer industry." "We in the Internet hacker culture want to have access

to these source codes and Apple really gets it," he said. "Now we'd like to see more of their codes." Jobs said that Apple will watch how the server source codes are used, but that he would like to open codes from more systems in the future. Technology experts at universities said that the open source code will allow them to customise their networks to Apple's operating system. "This new accessibility will allow sites such as MIT the ability to bring new technologies to the Macintosh platform sooner," said Marshall Vale at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Music academy in Berlin to carry Menuhin's name

BERLIN (AFP) — The international academy for gifted young musicians in Germany, which is being set up here, will carry the name of Yehudi Menuhin, the world famous conductor and violinist. Menuhin, who had himself been a child prodigy, was co-initiator, patron and supporter of the project. He died of heart failure in Berlin last Friday, the association setting up the project said Wednesday. Two prestigious Berlin orchestras — the Berlin Philharmonic and the Staatskapelle Berlin — were dedicating concerts this week to Menuhin. The Berlin Philharmonic gave a concert on Tuesday performing works by Schumann and Shostakovich under the baton of Kurt Sanderling. And German President Roman Herzog will attend a concert Sunday by the Staatskapelle under Daniel Barenboim in a performance of a Beethoven violin concerto, with soloist Maxim Vengerov, and Beethoven's fifth symphony. The performers have agreed to forego their fees and ticket revenue will be handed over to Menuhin's Live Music Now Foundation, which allows young musicians to perform in hospitals, old people's homes and prisons to people who are unable to attend concerts.

A FREE* LINE FOR EVERYONE



Fastlink wants everyone to get a mobile line this year. So, during the month of March, Fastlink is giving lines away for free! That means no connection fee!

What's more, Fastlink is waiving the first month's subscription fee! And, so that you can call your friends and family, Fastlink is offering a Motorola D520 for only JD 70!

Fastlink... Keeping You Close To Those Who Matter The Most..

For more information call us at: Amman: Um Uthman 551 2010, Wihdat (Taybat Village): 477 0770, Ajlun: 03 202 2557, Irbid (Housing Bank Complex): 02 251 691, and 111 on your mobile, or contact one of our direct sales representatives. Authorized Dealers: Madaba: 464 7666, Al-Raad Al-Ordany: 560 2924, Sawadha: 551 8897, Al-Ayyun: 551 9533, Mobile World: 552 1411, Telelink: 586 1055, Telecom: 566 9996, Samany (GSM): 462 1599, Ghadaba: 551 8278, Naxos: 567 7729, Conatech (Urbid): 02 270061, Al-Habash (Kutbi): 03 343710.

* Please Note: (1) A JD 100 deposit may apply. (2) Offer does not include airtime charges. Prices subject to 10% government sales tax. Offer not applicable to Sadaq subscriptions. Jordanian nationals must present proof of their national identity number. Non-residents must present proof of their residency. Motorola D520 subject to availability. Motorola D520 available separately at JD 273. Regular rates will be applied if subscription is terminated within 90 days. Offer ends March 25th, 1999.

GSM

Fastlink
Keep Close

Jordan Times

An independent Arab public daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation Established 1975
 مؤسسة الصحافة الأردنية

Chairman of the Board of Directors
 Abdel Salam Tarawneh

Vice Chairman & Director General
 Mohammad Amad

Executive Editor
 Abdullah Hasanat

Responsible Editor
 Etia Nasrallah

Editorial and Advertising offices
 Jordan Press Foundation,
 University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman

Telephones: 5684311, 5699634, 5667171, 5603585
 Facsimile: 5696183

E-mail: jotimes@go.com.jo

Web Site: <http://www.access2arabia.com/jordantimes/>

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times Advertising Department

Serious blueprint

THE GOVERNMENTAL blueprint for coping with water shortage, this year reflects the seriousness with which Prime Minister Abdur-Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh is dealing with the crisis. The first feature of the programme of action is the insistence that Israel live up to its treaty obligation and supply the Kingdom with all its share of water agreed upon with no conditions attached. Although the prime minister has not disclosed how he is going about attaining this objective, one can count on his manner of talking to the Israelis to be effective. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has already ruled out full implementation of the treaty with Jordan on the water issue and called instead for an "amicable solution."

The second aspect of the emergency plan is to take full control of some 1,654 privately-owned wells, 528 of them unlicensed. Many governments in the past flinched with this measure but no government was able to see it through. The current government, however, says it is determined to go ahead and seize control of water resources under private hands and end their current exploitation. It is pertinent to recall in this context that the very important Disi water is heavily used by five major farms in the south at nearly no cost to their owners, and this misuse of scarce water resources must end forthwith.

Former Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti was in the process of cancelling past state agreements with these five farms under which the private farms used the Disi water resources for free. The Kabariti government was changed, though, before it was able to conclude its measures to stop the free water exploitation in the south.

The other complementary steps the government envisages are no less critical and important. Domestic water rationing is clearly in the pipeline and no one may complain about this remedy. People who have swimming pools and heavily use water for this purely recreational purpose may have to rely on their own system of water purification instead of municipal water to fill their pools. Limitations on water-intensive agricultural production also stands to reason under current water conditions. While the government takes the bull by the horns, we all should contribute in our homes, offices and elsewhere to water conservation.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Faneh commented on the Israeli decision to cut water supplies to Jordan this year for reasons of a regional drought, calling it a "bizarre" decision that contradicts the 1994 peace treaty. Jordan rejected the decision, because that water share rightfully belongs to the Kingdom, and because the serious drought also affects Jordan, added Faneh. Israel wants to cut 50mc, which makes up 5 per cent of Jordan's total consumption of water and at the same time amounts to less than 1 per cent of the Israel's consumption, said the writer. Israel is being "moody" in dealing with the treaty, said Faneh; it implements what it likes and suspends what it does not. Faneh hoped that Israel will back down on its "stupid" decision and meet its commitments under the peace treaty.

Al Dostour's Mazen Saket said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent statements do not only concern water issues and Jordan's share, but also underlined that Israel will remain for good in the Aghwar area, and that Jerusalem is not negotiable as it is the Jewish state's "eternal and unified capital." Jordan Valley Netanyahu's statements are not unusual, it is "strange" to think that such a stand should only be adopted by the prime minister and his Likud Party, argued Saket. It seems that the Arab media want people to believe that the problem only concerns Netanyahu and his party, forgetting that the Israeli Labour Party is the one that was in charge of the 1967 war, constructed settlements and set up the Alton project, which relies on the following: Jerusalem as Israel's capital, settlements in the Jordan Valley area which remains under Israeli domination, expanding the Jewish state, and withdrawing only from areas with crowded Arab populations, said the writer. These are the basis for the Israeli vision of the current settlement, and they are strongly backed by Netanyahu, said Saket.

No water, no peace

View from
 Academia



Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubeh

UNLESS GOD Almighty, or mother nature, interferes in the last minute and brings serious rain, in a year which has almost been without, the forthcoming summer will be a tough one to bear.

The scenario, as the Jordan Times editorial entitled "Watering Peace" (last Tuesday) effectively depicts it, is all too familiar: no water at homes for weeks, no bottled water in the market, kids sent to relatives in hometowns, the prices of water tanks rocketing.

Think of bathrooms without running water. While in the rural stage of our development (not long ago), this posed no problem whatsoever for us (we responded to the call of nature in nature itself), but in the blissful urbanised stage which we have recently entered bathrooms without water amounts to a nightmare.

Not enough rain, not enough water. No peace of mind at this level.

Well, what do you do? Let's be hopeful. It is the second half of March still — it is not too late yet for the Almighty, or mother nature, to intervene. According to our grandparents (who are generally accurate, despite their tendency to dramatise), "March is the month of the big seven snow storms." Well, we will be grateful now that we are approaching the end of this blissful month, with just one

big snow storm.

And there is still April. Some good rain falls in April, usually.

Hopefully, this April will not be that of which T.S. Eliot speaks in his "Waste Land": "the cruellest month of the year." We hope it will be benign. But there is May also. Do not underestimate May. I remember many a May when people came to regret a change of clothes. "Change of clothes"? Well, on the first of May every year soldiers and policemen switch from winter to summer outfits. Many civilians follow suit. I distinctly remember many a May when, after a couple of sunny days, a week of cold and rain comes.

Civilians, less obliged to follow rules than people in the military, switch back to winter clothes. I hope that this May many among us switch back to winter clothes.

But you know what, you can't count on the weather very much. Mother nature is fickle. Eliot may be right: not only April but March and May may turn out to be not only cruel but stingy. No peace of mind at this level.

What can you count on? Well, maybe the peace treaty with Israel. Not long ago (it now sounds like ages ago, though) when many among us in this part of the world were debating the pros and cons of peace, many

emphasised the fact that peace will not only bring us an immediate restoration of land but also of water rights.

Water emerged as a real issue then (it is a real issue now): no peace, no water rights. Peace has come (at least in part), and our water rights should come. We will not get into statistics, figures, quotas, articles of agreements, and the logic of politicians or experts. The so-called man in the street in our part of the world, who is hard hit by water shortage, does not stomach figures, statistics and quotas. His logic is simple: if there is a peace agreement, there are water rights (or there should be). Otherwise, there is something seriously wrong with the agreements and with peace. No water, no peace.

We hope the Israeli government will take this into account and not disappoint or embarrass the Jordanian negotiators in the eyes of the man in the street. We hope the Israeli government will turn out to be reliable in this dimension of the peace agreement at least, and not turn out to be as fickle as the weather. Such fickleness, unlike the fickleness of the weather, will not only harm people in the summer; it will also harm people's conception of peace. We hope there is no fickleness there.

But we also hope there is no fickleness

water pipe "by mistake" and the water runs in alleys and streets for days. I cannot help but feel angry and sceptical of governmental advice and governmental policies. Also, when I see some neighbourhoods drink drops and bathe in drops and others wash their cars with hoses at full capacity, I cannot but feel the injustice of distribution.

There is, additionally, a problem of inconsistency. At the beginning of last summer, we used to get water once a week. Wednesday evening, drops of water started to fall in the water tank, and their momentum increased at night. By the morning of the second day, we had the water tank half or two-thirds full. Fine, we said.

A couple of weeks later, the picture changed dramatically. Two weeks passed, and no water came. Only the third week did drops begin to fall in the tank. Does anybody keep track of who gets what and when? I also hope the Water Authority will have mercy on people who live on hill tops or next to the "end" of the water lines.

We are willing to face the coming summer with an open mind, but we hope there is no fickleness this year on part of mother nature, partner-in-peace Israel and our new (promising) government. No water, no peace: peace of mind, and Mideast peace.



Coping with water shortage

By Munther J. Haddadin

SEVERAL BOOKLETS have been issued by the World Bank addressing the subject of water in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. Some articles have also been published on the same topic here in Jordan and in Arabic newspapers published in London. Other leading newspapers have published short articles about the subject as well (Los Angeles Times, New York Times and others).

Speaking generally of water in the MENA region, or of Water and the Arabs, does not help diagnose the particular problems faced by particular countries. Actually, it masks the huge differences among many of its countries. One can not parallel the water stress in a country like Jordan (175 cubic metres per capita per year) with the water situation in Iraq (3200 cubic metres per capita per year) or Egypt (1100 cubic metres per capita per year). Moreover, within the territories of the same country, like Syria for example, the water stress varies from high in the Damascus region (Barada and Awaj basin) to comfortable in the Deir Zor region (Euphrates basin) and in the Orontes basin at large.

Likewise, one cannot speak in general terms of the water problems in a country like Lebanon with modest deficit in the foreign trade in food commodities and Jordan, for example, whose deficit in the same trade was about \$115 per capita. Although agriculture contributes some 8% to Jordan's GDP, it generates some 24% of the jobs in the market, and helps reduce the foreign exchange bill which would be high in comparison to Jordan's ability to earn foreign currency. Additionally, one cannot play down the importance of agriculture in the lives of rural people like Jordanians in the same way one ventures to play down the role of agriculture in a country like Israel. Whereas Jordanians have practised agriculture since the dawn of civilisation, Jews at large have practised different trades throughout their history and agriculture was introduced to their livelihoods by the Zionist movement and for reasons not from a need to survive but from the designs to establish a homeland in Palestine.

Finally, one cannot generalise, like the above cited articles and booklets do, and recommend desalinisation of sea water as the only way out of the existing or impending water stress. A sweeping statement like that ignores the disparities in national incomes between countries, the relative locations of water consumption from the sea cost, and the domestic availability of cheap energy.

In a country like Israel, for example, where the GDP per capita approaches \$18,000 per year, and the urban areas are either on the seashore or close to it, desalinisation could be the logical answer; it can not be afforded by the Palestinians whose per capita income is hardly \$1,600, and the consumption centres are away from the sea coast and at higher elevations. And whereas agriculture can be played down in a country like Qatar or Kuwait, where the population is heavily urban and the ability to import food is high, the importance of agriculture is great in such countries as Yemen, Jordan and Tunisia among many others. Usually, demographic and security factors lean towards maintaining rural populations in their areas, and the ability to service foreign trade with foreign currency determines the importance of domestic food production.

I think the answer to the water problems lies in basic, unsophisticated principles and their dualities, summarised as follows:

Water is needed for economic development, and, conversely, economic development is needed for water. The society has to attain a decent level of economic well-being to have it afford the cost of new, expensive water. The abilities of the country to accelerate its economic growth determines its capability in making more water available. As a yardstick, it should be noted that the consumer, in and areas like ours, should not pay more than 2 to 3 per cent of his income for domestic water. I.e. his income should be between 30 to 50 times the cost of water.

Water is needed for human life, and, conversely, human efforts are needed to manage water. The development of human resources — through education and training, organisation and participation, and public awareness — is a primary factor in making more water available for beneficial use, and for the minimisation of waste. This is the most important factor in facing times of crisis. Human innovation is needed to improve water use efficiencies, and for the treatment and reuse of waste water.

Water is needed to preserve and clean the environment, and environmental protection is needed to preserve the water resources. The least costly water is the existing water if protected against pollution and against over-pumping and misuse.

Energy is needed for water, and, conversely, water is needed for energy. The two are twins: from water falls man generates energy, and with energy inputs man is able to generate sweet water from salty sea water, and to pump water to

To declare or not to declare

FIVE YEARS ago Palestinian and Israeli negotiators holed up in the Cairo were given a tough task: conclude negotiations for an interim agreement for the implementation of the Declaration of Principles between the PLO and Israel by May 4th, 1994.

This was the day U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher was due in Cairo and it was also Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's birthday. Under such Arab and American pressure the maps, details of border crossings, criteria for prisoner releases, safe passage ways and other details had to be agreed upon.

As soon as the agreement was signed the clock for the five-year interim period set forth in the agreement signed on the White House lawn in September 1993 began ticking. This Palestinian-Israeli agreement which is commonly referred to as the Oslo Agreement stipulates clearly and unambiguously that earnest talks for the permanent status of the Palestinian territories are to begin no later than the beginning of the third year of the agreement and are to be concluded "no later than the fifth year." This timeline more than all the details of the interim phase was the key to Palestinians accepting to begin an onerous and uneven peace process with their enemies who had illegally occupied their territories and dispersed their people to the four corners of the world. To his many Palestinian and Arab critics the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, repeatedly referred to the end of the interim period as the beginning of Palestinian statehood.

However, except for a short ceremonial opening of the permanent status talks in May 1996 by Shimon Peres, no movement has taken place on this front. Palestinians have carried out most of their obligations of that and the two subsequent agreements signed with the Netanyahu Administration (Hebron and Wye). The U.S. administration, which witnessed all the agreements, has publicly exonerated the Palestinians while chastising the Israelis for not carrying out their obligations vis-a-vis the peace process.

As we approach the end of the agreed upon deadline Palestinians were placed in a quandary. The Israeli elections expected in the summer of 2000 had been abruptly changed to May 17th 1999. Arab and Western leaders are pressing the Palestinians to postpone a declaration of an independent state. The Palestinian public fear indefinite Israeli procrastination, and are pressing that the goal of statehood which was the reason many reluctantly accepted the Oslo Agreement should not be put off any more.

The major argument of the opponents of a declaration of statehood argue that such an announcement two weeks before the Israeli elections will help the anti-peace camp. They also fear that such a unilateral Palestinian declaration could trigger further unilateral Israeli actions including more settlements and possibly the annexation of all the West Bank and Gaza areas still under direct Israeli military control.

Supporters of the declaration dismiss the above-mentioned arguments: there is no proof that

Jerusalem Life



Daoud Kuttub

such a declaration will help this or that party, they say. Some argue that a postponement of the declaration could be presented by the Netanyahu election campaign as further proof that Palestinians can be intimidated into required behaviour only by a "strong" Israeli leader. Annexation of further Palestinian territories doesn't scare Palestinians who have seen perpetual occupation and annexation. They say that the major parties in Israel are committed publicly to withdraw from parts or all of the Golan Heights. The Oslo Agreement signed by the state of Israel confirms that Jerusalem's future will be negotiated. Both Jerusalem and the Golan Heights were unilaterally annexed by Israel.

Palestinians, who are often chided by Israelis and warned not to interfere in the Israeli elections are puzzled by the position they find themselves in. They are being asked by the international community to make a decision that is connected to their future for the sake of influencing the Israeli public before elections. Israeli elections, of course, should not be the only reason for what Palestinians decide. The nature of the Palestinian state and the state of preparedness for such a state should certainly take precedent in making such a decision.

Palestinian President Yasser Arafat can't let this date set forth by the international community go by. The Oslo Agreement placed many restrictions on Palestinian political, legislative and economic life.

The interim agreement has not produced even minimum improvements in the daily lives of nearly three million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Palestinians need to take real control over their affairs.

Movement of people and goods within the Palestinian territories and to the outside world have not been accomplished. A constitution that sets forth a democratic system of government is necessary, as is the hard job of building the institutions of a state and laying foundations for social and economic infrastructures. The Egyptian and American friends of Palestine who helped set the date for the conclusion of the interim period should understand that further delays to the inevitability of Palestinian statehood will not help the peace process, the future of the Middle East or the stability of Israel.

The writer is a former minister of water

Kicking up a sandstorm

Qatar television beams something new over Arab airwaves, but its opinions aren't always welcome

By Scott MacLeod

WHEN THE princes and prime ministers of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council gathered for an annual meeting recently, Arab television stations served up their usual coverage, which is invariably uncritical and mostly reverential.

All that is, except the Al Jazeera Satellite Channel broadcasting from the tiny oil sheikhdom of Qatar. On its Opposite Direction talk show, Al Jazeera, which means the peninsula, gave Kuwaiti professor Abdullah Nefaisi a platform to question not only the usefulness of the regional economic body but the fitness of the Gulf monarchs to govern. He rebuked Saudi Arabia for locking up dissidents and attacked the Saudi clergy for ignoring issues like royal corruption. "Political freedom in the Gulf," Nefaisi scoffed. "It doesn't exist."

But then there's Qatar, population 600,000, where Emir Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, 47, is making good on a promise of greater democ-

racy made when he took over from his father in 1996. Since his government launched Al Jazeera later that year, the Doha-based channel has become the most free-wheeling station in the Arab World, delighting millions of viewers across the Middle East — numbed by decades of censored news on state-controlled television — and Europe and North America. "Anyone broadcasting the truth, whether it makes governments happy or not, is going to win audiences," says Cairo journalism professor Hussein Amin. Adds Jon Alterman, author of a study on satellite television's impact on the Middle East: "This is the beginning of a fundamental change."

Al Jazeera's talk shows are tackling crucial yet taboo subjects like human rights, women's freedom, banned political groups, polygamy, torture and rival interpretations of Islamic teachings. Opposite Direction has infuriated Arab rulers by bringing into the studio political dissidents from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Syria, Jordan, Morocco and

'This is the beginning of a fundamental change'

Iraq. Host Faisal Al Kasim encourages controversy: many of the two-hour, weekly call-in programmes have featured guests shouting to be heard, hurling insults, and even coming close to fistfights.

Not a few offended Arab regimes would like to take a few swings of

their own. Kuwait's information minister flew to Doha to complain in person after a programme needed his government for its stand on Iraq. Algeria's regime reportedly shut off electricity in parts of the country rather than allow Algerian television sets to pick up a debate on the country's bloody civil war. The Jordanian government closed down Al Jazeera's news bureau in Amman after a talk show guest accused Jordan of collaborating with Israel.

In Saudi Arabia, Muslim preachers denounced Al Jazeera for corrupting Arab morals, and there is said to be a "political farwa" forbidding Saudis from appearing on the station's shows. Nor has host country Qatar been spared: Al Jazeera has aired criticisms of the emir's activities, notably one of his pet projects, a Middle East economic summit to which Israel was invited.

News director Salah Nejm says no story is off limits and two recent scoops seem to prove the point: an exclusive broadcast of a speech by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and

an interview with Saudi renegade Osama Ben Laden. Al Jazeera's 90 newscasters, editors and correspondents are determined to take advantage of the digital technology that helps make their broadcasting revolution possible. During the American and British bombing blitz on Iraq in December, Al Jazeera's live satellite coverage kept pace with CNN's.

That kind of professionalism explains why Al Jazeera is the No. 1 Arab satellite news channel. Can it last? One problem may be financing. The plan is to make it independent by 2001, but advertisers may prefer to put their dinars into fluffier channels like Lebanon's LBC, whose women's exercise programme, Hayfa Is the Only One For You is a huge hit with both sexes. Al Jazeera's staffers are keenly aware that in 1996 Saudi partners abruptly pulled the plug on an earlier Arab news channel broadcasting from London after it aired a documentary about Saudi executions.

Despite the diplomatic heat on

Qatar, however, there is no sign that the emir will blink. Last month, Al Jazeera added Washington and Tehran to its network of eight foreign news bureaus and began broadcasting 24 hours a day. "Free expression is a human right," says Al Jazeera chairman Hamad Bin Thamer Al Thani. "It is difficult to control information when the world has become a small village."

Qatari officials insist that Al Jazeera is part of a plan to expand political participation inside the country. That will not only head off future discontent, they say, but will cushion Qatar against regional rivalries and falling oil prices.

Towards that end, curbs have been lifted on Qatar's local television and newspapers as well. Last week, the country held its first democratic elections — for 29 municipal districts — in which women will stand as candidates and have the vote. The important question may be whether Qatari-style glasnost will catch on.

— Time

Opinion poll finds high public confidence in Rawabdeh government

(Continued from page 1)

Another analyst attributed the favourable ratings to the warm reception accorded Rawabdeh and certain members of his team by the press.

Although Tarawneh's was a lame duck government for reasons beyond its control, the Rawabdeh government inherits problems common to all previous cabinets — a deepening economic crisis, escalating poverty, a faltering peace process and, now, another looming water crisis.

Rawabdeh's mandate is stacked with seemingly insurmountable tasks. His Majesty King Abdullah told Rawabdeh that his task first and foremost is to rejuvenate the national economy, whose growth hovers at near zero per cent, and second, putting unemployed Jordanians to work. The King also entrusted Rawabdeh with waging war against nepotism, corruption, negligence and incompetence in the public sector and purging down the lumbering bureaucracy.

The public and opinion leaders, however, are less impressed with the combination of Cabinet personalities: only 33.3 per cent of the general public and 23 per cent of opinion leaders

think the new combination is suitable. More than 32 and 46 per cent, respectively, think the new alliance is only moderately adequate.

"It shows that, although people approve of Rawabdeh, his Cabinet is not up to the calibre people expected," said Hamareh.

The new government has 11 first-time ministers, including several technocrats and two former professional association heads. Still, the public regards the executive as quite capable in dealing with each assignment.

For example, 68.7 per cent of the public believe that Rawabdeh and his team can be highly successful in alleviating the country's economic burdens, whereas only seven months ago, only 53 per cent found the Tarawneh government capable of the task. In fact, the public showed substantially more confidence in the Rawabdeh government's capabilities in all categories than they did in the Tarawneh's. More than half believe the new team can successfully address the unemployment problem; 48.5 per cent believe it can successfully address poverty issues; 63.6 per cent believe it can very successfully confront corruption; 55 per cent believe he can

be successful in reforming the bureaucracy; and 42 per cent think he will successfully stem nepotism and "wasta." Opinion leaders showed less confidence in the government's ability to deal with these issues.

Conversely, opinion leaders showed more confidence in the government's ability to advance less tangible causes. More than 83 per cent of opinion leaders said the government would be successful in boosting national unity, versus 78.6 per cent of the general public; 70.2 per cent and 68.3 per cent respectively said the team would be quite successful in deepening democracy; and 90.4 per cent and 88.8 per cent, respectively said, the government would be successful in fostering relations with Arab states.

In all categories, both opinion leaders and the general public expressed more confidence in the Rawabdeh government's capability to carry out its agenda.

"The results show that there is more confidence in the agenda this time," said Hamareh. "[The results] show there are a lot of goodwill and high expectations."

The CSS released for the first time results according

to region (north, central and south) and according to opinion in the major populated cities (Amman, Salt, Madaba, Zarqa, Irbid, Mafraq, Jerash, Ajloun, Karak, Tafleeh, Ma'an and Aqaba).

Rawabdeh and team received the highest approval rating in Madaba (58 per cent of Madaba residents surveyed said his team will be highly successful) and the lowest (33.8 per cent) in Ma'an.

The CSS has tracked opinion in region and city for all previous polls, but released them for the first time along with the survey of the Rawabdeh government after several requests to do so.

"People thought that because Rawabdeh is from Irbid, he would get the highest approval rating there and the lowest in the south," Hamareh said, referring to a common perception that political preferences are dominated by tribal affiliation.

Hamareh said that results of the four surveys have shown that this tendency is ebbing.

"We see a process of socialisation," he said.

The CSS will conduct a second poll on the Rawabdeh government after its first 100 days in office.

Overestimating PCs

By Jean-Claude Elias

FLASHY BUZZWORDS like megahertz, gigabytes and super-micro-dot may make you think that the current Pentium PCs have enough power to handle any task you would throw at them. Admittedly, they are more than powerful enough for common programmes like office suites (Word processing and the like), for browsing the Internet and doing routine office and home computing.

However, when it comes to processing digital photographs and sound, with professional quality, even the fastest Pentium CPU may seem slow.

Processing motion pictures and video is even more demanding in terms of computing power.

Whereas "regular" Pentiums — whatever the model and the MHz — can satisfy amateurs and semi-pros, the real professionals use different computers. To name only one such maker, Silicon Graphics (SG) designs and produces machines based on different hardware and software than middle-of-the-road

PCs.

Particularly oriented towards those who work on motion graphics and animation, the SG systems cost 10 to 20 times more than the fastest Pentium or Macintosh. But for those who use them, they are worth every dollar. Overall, their performance is far superior to regular computers in every aspect — computing speed, input/output transfer rates, monitor sharpness and true colour rendition, stability and reliability of the system, and so forth. These are the machines used for instance to create special effects for the movie industry. The stunning effects we see in "Alien," "Flubber" or "The Fifth Element" are done on such stations.

The advertisements in computer magazines want us to believe that we can do all that with, say, a Pentium 300. Simply, it is not true: either we can't do it at all, or it will take such a long time to do the processing that we would lose all interest in the project.

For those who still want to process digital images, videos and music like pros do, but with a Pentium, the best



compromise consists of beefing up the machine as much as possible. Start with a Pentium 450 for example. Then install 256MB of memory (instead of the usual 32 or 64), a fast and large SCSI hard disk drive (8, 13 or 20 GB) and the best screen adapter you can find (available at about JD200).

Such a configuration won't really compete with an SG station but with a little patience and a lot of talent, it will allow you to think of creating special effects for the next sequel of the "Titanic," in the comfort of your home and without breaking the bank.

Jean-Claude Elias can be reached by e-mail at jeanclaudio@nets.com.jo

Iran optimistic about nuclear cooperation with Russia

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran

said Wednesday it was confident its nuclear cooperation with Russia would continue, shortly before news broke that Moscow has decided to scale back its assistance to Tehran.

"We don't have any indication of a possible rupture in [Russia's] cooperation, and the two countries have very good relations," foreign ministry

spokesman Hamid Reza Assefi said.

"Our atomic cooperation with Russia is of a peaceful nature, and under the supervision of the International Atomic Energy Agency," Assefi told a news conference.

He spoke shortly before news broke that Moscow announced that it had decided to cut back nuclear cooperation with

Iran and expected the United States to lift sanctions against Russian institutes accused of supplying Tehran with sensitive technical know-how.

"I told them to end all contact with Iran," Atomic Energy Minister Yevgeny Adamov said of the Niket Institute which is one of 10 facilities singled out by Washington for allegedly helping develop Iran's

nuclear programme.

The United States has been concerned that Russian wants to expand its nuclear cooperation with Iran and has opposed Moscow's decision to develop a nuclear reactor at Bushehr on the Persian Gulf.

Russia was completing one nuclear reactor at the site and being courted by Iran to build three more.

Lower House denounces Israeli plan to reduce water supplies

(Continued from page 1)

"If any party failed to be committed to the treaty, then the other party has the right to consider the agreement as null and void," Deputy Hmoud Khalayleh told his colleagues.

"I request that the government freeze all other articles in the peace treaty," Khalayleh added.

During the session, deputies used language in describing Israel reminiscent of the pre-treaty era, such as "Zionist enemy" and the "Zionist entity," a clear indication of their anger at Israeli government policy.

"I am not convinced of peace with the government of [Benjamin] Netanyahu... and I urge the government to reconsider the remaining articles of the peace treaty."

Deputy Mijhim Squir said.

It was the first bitter popular criticism of Israel since His Majesty King Abdullah's accession to the Throne on Feb. 7 after the death of King Hussein.

In their petition, the deputies asked "the government to present to Parliament a draft law to revoke the peace treaty."

"Israel's obstinacy was a fundamental breach of the treaty, a departure from commitments to Jordan and a violation of the basis of international and diplomatic norms," the petition said.

The treaty "has not achieved its aspired goals of helping the Arab Nation and the Arab people... but has portrayed us as serving Israeli interests," the motion said.

Prime Minister Abdur-

Ra'uf S. Rawabdeh reiterated that the government rejects the Israeli move and will insist on getting its full share of water from Israel.

"We will not accept even negotiating on the water deal," Rawabdeh said. "The government insists on getting its full share of water, and we are not ready to discuss the reasons that led the Israeli government to reconsider the water deal," the premier told the lawmakers.

He said that Jordan has "ways" to ensure its rights, adding that he will not disclose them at this stage.

Rawabdeh told deputies that the government will discuss on Saturday a general strategy to counter the shortage of water expected this summer because of low rainfall this winter.

He added that the strategy

will be submitted to the House for further discussion. Israel said the regional drought has severely affected its reserves. But keen to maintain close ties with Jordan, Israel left the door open for further negotiations.

However, a meeting between senior water experts from both sides at the Dead Sea late Tuesday failed to reach a solution. Still, Jordanian officials said they sensed more flexibility from the Israeli team headed by Water Commissioner Meir Ben Meir.

Jordan, which announced a state of drought in January, depends heavily on rain to fill its dams and on water from Israel.

Officials are expected to announce water rationing and other contingency plans on Saturday.

Iraq rejects criticism from Gulf Arab FMs

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq on Wednesday rejected criticism from Gulf Arab foreign ministers of its failure to cooperate with the United Nations and accused Saudi Arabia and Kuwait of taking their orders from Washington.

The stand adopted by Gulf foreign ministers was proof of their "total submission to U.S. pressure and blackmail," an information ministry spokesman charged.

quoted by the official news agency INA. "The text was a copy of the U.S. position on Iraq," he said, noting it came only days after U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen toured the Gulf.

He said the statement adopted in the Saudi capital on Monday, two days ahead of a meeting of Arab foreign ministers in Cairo, was riddled with "shameless lies."

"It's not Iraq which is defying international resolutions, but the Saudi and Kuwaiti regimes, from whose bases U.S. and British planes take off to bomb Iraq and kill its sons," the spokesman said.

After a two-day meeting, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) — grouping Kuwait and Saudi Arabia with Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates — criticised Baghdad's refusal to

cooperate with three U.N. panels.

They expressed "deep regret and concern at the persistence of the Iraqi government in defying international legitimacy."

The GCC also called on Baghdad to halt its threats against Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, which allow British and U.S. warplanes to use bases on their territory to launch flights over "no-fly" zones over north and south Iraq.

"The Iraqi regime's continual threats reflect its indifference to the will of the Arab World and the international community," the ministers said.

OPROEP AAN ALLE NEDERLANDERS IN HET BUITENLAND

Europese Parlementsverkiezingen 10 juni 1999

Op 10 juni 1999 zullen de verkiezingen voor het Europees Parlement worden gehouden. Iedere stemgerechtigde Nederlander kan aan deze verkiezingen deelnemen, ook als hij of zij in het buitenland woont. Dat wil zeggen dat iedereen met de Nederlandse nationaliteit, ongeacht zijn of haar woonplaats, van 18 jaar of ouder in principe kan deelnemen.

MAAK GEBRUIK VAN UW STEMRECHT

- Hoe kunt u stemmen?

Om te kunnen stemmen moet u zich tijdig als kiezer registreren. Van 10 december 1998 tot en met 28 april 1999 kunt u zich bij de gemeente Den Haag laten opnemen in het kiezersregister voor de Europese Parlementsverkiezingen. De kiesregistratieformulieren zijn op aanvraag verkrijgbaar bij uw ambassade of consulaat. Tevens kunt u de formulieren terugvinden op de internet-site van het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken.

- Heeft u al eerder gestemd?

Nederlanders woonachtig in het buitenland die op 6 mei 1998 hebben deelgenomen aan de verkiezingen voor de Tweede Kamer krijgen automatisch van de gemeente Den Haag een nieuw Kiesregistratieformulier toegezonden. Dit formulier krijgt u uiteraard toegestuurd op het in 1998 opgegeven adres. Als u in de tussentijd verhuisd bent, kunt u voor de zekerheid het best een nieuw registratieformulier aanvragen.

- Wilt u meer informatie?

Op de internet-site van Buitenlandse Zaken vindt u een beschrijving van de registratieprocedure. U kunt natuurlijk ook altijd contact opnemen met uw ambassade of consulaat.

Internetadres Buitenlandse Zaken: <http://www.minbuza.nl>

MINISTERIE VAN BUITENLANDSE ZAKEN

Reform package awaits Cabinet approval before endorsement by IMF board

By Ghadeer Taher

AMMAN — The recently negotiated International Monetary Fund (IMF) reform package will be presented to the Cabinet this week for approval, said Finance Minister Michel Marto Wednesday.

The three-year programme, which is underpinned by an estimated \$150 million a year in IMF financing, has received approval from the fund's management. It will be presented to the IMF board after it gains government approval.

The package conditions hundreds of millions of dollars in aid to economic reforms, including trade and tax reforms, privatising state monopolies, as well as tight fiscal restraint.

The agreement should help facilitate the mix of debt rescheduling and write-offs Jordan has hoped for following the massive show of support for His Majesty King Abdullah by world leaders who attended King Hussein's funeral last month.

The programme will help pave the way for Jordan to reschedule its debt — some

\$6.8 billion — with the Paris Club and other creditors. Debt servicing, a major burden for the Kingdom, will top \$800 million this year from an estimated \$500 million last year.

Last year, the budget deficit reached 9.6 per cent of gross domestic product, well above the IMF-set target of 3.5 per cent. That, and a sharp slowdown in economic growth, forced Jordan to extend a 10-year programme with the fund, which ended last month.

Jordan and the IMF have agreed to a seven per cent budget deficit for this year.

By Saad G. Hattar

AMMAN — The cash-strapped government and legislators are still haggling over the mechanism of a potential salary hike, amidst a shrinking budget, according to parliamentary sources.

The Financial and Economic Committee of the Lower House of Parliament have reached "an amicable common ground" regarding ways of securing enough funds for the expected raise, an authoritative parliamentary source told the Jordan Times on Wednesday.

"Once the committee seals a final draft within two days, the House will debate the issue

before presenting it to the government," he said.

The committee, headed by former minister Ali Abul Ragheb, have been trying to push ahead for the government to adopt this costly decision.

The legislators' drive is based on a special memo signed by 55 out of the 80 elected deputies, urging the executive branch to raise salaries, in a bid to compensate for lifting bread subsidies.

The House committee is also demanding the lift of custom on production inputs, now set at roughly 40 per cent of imported materials.

Both measures are expected to cost JD40 million (20 million each), in extra budget allo-

cations.

"To offset the expected expenses, the committee is willing to accept a marginal raise of two per cent on the sales tax," Abul Ragheb told the Jordan Times.

While deputies called for a slap-system pay-raise between JD4 to JD10, the government argued that such a raise would further aggravate the 1999 target deficit of nearly JD435 million, seven per cent of the budget.

Salaries and pension allocations for 450,000 civil servants and military employees consume up to one-third of the Kingdom's austerity budget, according to official figures.

The committee's projected hike will be applied to the wages of 320,000 public employees, according to Abul Ragheb.

The expected raise, designed to cover at random mainly lower-income civil servants, is estimated to cost JD20 million.

The committee has been weighing various options including raising the salaries between JD4 to JD10 in return for hiking the sales tax by two per cent.

The government is in a "Catch 22" situation between meeting the deputies' demands and reining in a budget deficit.

Jordanians, struck by dwindling purchasing power, have

been yearning for an increase to their salaries, eroded by higher inflation rates.

The government, committed to an IMF-designed economic restructuring programme, has to fill in the gaps of any extra expenses.

The last official raise for public employees was issued a couple of years ago.

When the late King Hussein pledged in mid-1998 an extra monthly salary for army and police recruits, the decision cost the budget JD26 million.

The government then searched for resources to cover the King's unanticipated move.

Israel's 1998 growth weakest in a decade

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's economy grew just two per cent in 1998, the slowest growth rate in a decade, according to figures published by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) on Tuesday.

The growth rate, which compared with 2.4 per cent in 1997, is yet another sign of economic malaise in Israel only two months ahead of general elections.

On Monday, the CBS announced that consumer prices fell by 0.8 per cent in February following a fall of 0.5 per cent in January. Over 1998, inflation was

8.6 per cent.

Israel's slowdown has been blamed on a tight monetary policy brought in to stop a slide in the shekel on foreign exchange markets last year. The central bank's reference rate was hiked to 13.5 per cent from 9.5 per cent in November and October but has since been cut to 13 per cent.

Unemployment, which has improved slightly in the last two months, is about eight per cent, against six per cent when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took office nearly three years ago.

Another report by the CBS said Israel's current account deficit narrowed for the third consecutive year to \$2.297 billion in 1998 from \$4.911 billion a year earlier.

Israel recorded a current account surplus of \$578 million in the fourth quarter, compared with a deficit of \$209 million a year earlier, the bureau said.

"There was a decrease in the surplus of imports while merchandise exports rose," the bureau said. "The improvement in the current account deficit also occurred in the other com-

ponents of the account — services and factor income."

The merchandise trade deficit narrowed to \$3.26 billion in 1998 from \$5.18 billion a year earlier. In the fourth quarter, it declined to \$753 million from \$1.25 billion in the year ago period and \$788 million in third-quarter 1998.

Israel's service trade deficit narrowed to \$1.93 billion last year from \$2.3 billion in 1997.

Unilateral transfers declined slightly in 1998 to \$5.92 billion from \$6.0 billion in 1997.

Foreign financial investment fell to \$1.84 billion from \$3.27 billion in 1997. In the fourth quarter, however, financial investment reached \$161 million, turning around from a \$363 million net outflow in the third quarter.

Israel's foreign debt grew to \$54.9 billion last year from \$51.4 billion in 1997. Foreign assets held by Israelis amounted to \$40.7 billion, up from \$36.8 billion the year before.

Israel's current account deficit peaked in 1996 at \$6.62 billion.

The bureau said that starting in its 1998 figures it had revised its method for accounting for its balance of payments according to International Monetary Fund classifications.

Morocco's dirham seen up against dollar by end-99

RABAT (R) — Morocco's currency is expected to appreciate to 9.3 dirhams against the U.S. dollar by end 1999 due mainly to the newly established euro, bankers and analysts have said.

The Moroccan dirham, based on a basket of currencies including the dollar and European currencies, averaged 9.6 dirhams against the dollar in 1998, official figures showed.

"We expect the dirham to benefit this year from the newly established euro currency. It will show some corrections and appreciate by the end of 1999," a banker at the Casablanca-based French Paribas told Reuters.

"We expect the dirham to

stabilise at around 9.3 to the dollar towards the end of the year," he said.

Moroccan banks switched their trading to the euro immediately after it was introduced in early January.

Nearly two-thirds of Moroccan exports of around \$6.9 billion a year are directed to European countries, while half of the North African country's imports worth \$9.0 billion come from Europe.

"Many indicators show that the dirham is following an appreciation trend. This will have a positive impact on the trade balance and help the Socialist-led government to reduce the burden of the country's debt service," an analyst at Uptone Securities said.

TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT (4 MONTHS)

UNICEF Jordan Country Office is planning to recruit a Finance Assistant for a period of four months for its operation in Jordan.

DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

To perform the Accounts/Finance and Budget Management Functions of the office.

1. Review all financial transactions to ensure that all payment and receipts are recorded.
2. Use UNICEF EDP system to plan and effect all payments, salaries and financial entitlements.
3. Use EDP system to generate financial reports as required by HQ.
4. Responsible for budget control and preparation of financial data planning.
5. Calculate & clear all claims relating to travel, advances and medical.

QUALIFICATIONS:

- University degree in Accounting/Finance/Management
- Excellent computer skills.
- Seven years working experience in the field of finance.

Interested candidates to apply to:

Operations Officer
UNICEF - JCO
P.O. BOX 840162
Amman 11184
Fax. No. 4616947

Deadline for applications April 4, 1999

Exchange Rates Wednesday, 17-03-99											
ACCESS 4646868											
CURRENCY	JORDANIAN DYNAR	BAHRAIN DYNAR	EGYPTIAN POUND	IRANIAN RIAL	QATAR RIAL	SAUDI RIAL	YEMEN RIAL	LIBYAN DYNAR	OMAN RIAL	UAE DIRHAM	US DOLLAR
JORDAN DYNAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.8777	1.8387	0.1945	2.3115	0.2077	3.7083	3.7504	
SAUDI RIAL	5.2972	1.0000	1.0208	9.8467	9.7400	1.0300	12.2442	1.1008	3.7504	3.7504	
UAE DIRHAM	5.1853	0.9798	1.0000	9.7441	9.5416	1.0091	11.9948	0.781	3.6740	3.6740	
BAHRAIN DYNAR	0.5328	0.1025	0.1028	1.0000	0.9792	1.0336	1.2310	0.1106	0.3671	0.3671	
OMAN RIAL	0.5439	0.1027	0.1048	1.0212	1.0000	1.0358	1.2571	0.1130	0.3851	0.3851	
QATAR RIAL	5.1427	0.9708	0.9910	9.5655	9.4559	1.0000	11.8870	1.0684	3.6410	3.6410	
YEMEN RIAL	0.4328	0.0817	0.0834	0.8124	0.7955	0.8041	1.0000	0.0469	0.3063	0.3063	
LIBYAN DYNAR	4.8135	0.8987	0.9278	9.0385	8.8508	0.9392	11.1263	1.0000	3.4080	3.4080	
EGYPT POUND	21.2288	4.0078	4.0809	39.8521	38.0339	4.1280	49.0885	4.4102	15.0300	15.0300	
US DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2666	0.2722	2.6522	2.5971	0.2746	3.2648	0.2934	1.0000	1.0000	
LIBYAN DYNAR	0.8678	0.1638	0.1672	1.6295	1.5956	0.1687	2.0059	0.1803	0.6144	0.6144	
YEMEN RIAL	2.5147	0.4747	0.4846	4.7219	4.6238	0.4830	5.8126	0.5234	1.7204	1.7204	
OMAN RIAL	2.0556	0.3881	0.3991	3.8800	3.7788	0.3987	4.7518	0.4271	1.4554	1.4554	
QATAR RIAL	8.4335	1.5821	1.6252	15.8358	15.5068	1.6399	19.4936	1.7520	5.9709	5.9709	
SAUDI RIAL	1.6736	0.3159	0.3225	3.1428	3.0773	0.3254	3.8884	0.3477	1.1849	1.1849	
UAE DIRHAM	2.6333	0.5348	0.5460	5.3202	5.2057	0.5309	6.5491	0.5886	2.0080	2.0080	
YEMEN RIAL	11.5812	2.1825	2.2279	21.7088	21.2578	2.2481	26.7231	2.4018	8.1853	8.1853	
LIBYAN DYNAR	24.8951	4.6997	4.7874	48.7483	48.7781	4.8409	57.5439	5.1719	17.6257	17.6257	
OMAN RIAL	51.8872	9.7915	9.9951	97.3929	95.3684	10.0857	119.8890	10.7752	36.7220	36.7220	
QATAR RIAL	2.2527	0.4253	0.4341	4.2299	4.1420	0.4387	5.2070	0.4680	1.5945	1.5945	
SAUDI RIAL	4.1319	0.7800	0.7982	7.7587	7.5975	0.7835	9.5558	0.8584	2.9254	2.9254	
UAE DIRHAM	0.7483	0.1413	0.1442	1.4051	1.3759	0.1456	1.7297	0.1858	0.6298	0.6298	
YEMEN RIAL	17.6910	3.3337	3.4051	33.2159	32.5268	3.4400	40.8919	3.6752	12.5252	12.5252	
OMAN RIAL	2.1542	0.4067	0.4151	4.0451	3.9510	0.4189	4.9794	0.4475	1.5252	1.5252	
QATAR RIAL	1.2852	0.2426	0.2477	2.4133	2.3531	0.2499	2.9707	0.2873	0.9039	0.9039	

Exchange Rates Wednesday, 17-03-99											
ACCESS 4646868											
CURRENCY	JORDANIAN DYNAR	BAHRAIN DYNAR	EGYPTIAN POUND	IRANIAN RIAL	QATAR RIAL	SAUDI RIAL	YEMEN RIAL	LIBYAN DYNAR	OMAN RIAL	UAE DIRHAM	US DOLLAR
JORDAN DYNAR	1.0000	0.1888	0.1927	1.8777	1.8387	0.1945	2.3115	0.2077	3.7083	3.7504	
SAUDI RIAL	5.2972	1.0000	1.0208	9.8467	9.7400	1.0300	12.2442	1.1008	3.7504	3.7504	
UAE DIRHAM	5.1853	0.9798	1.0000	9.7441	9.5416	1.0091	11.9948	0.781	3.6740	3.6740	
BAHRAIN DYNAR	0.5328	0.1025	0.1028	1.0000	0.9792	1.0336	1.2310	0.1106	0.3671	0.3671	
OMAN RIAL	0.5439	0.1027	0.1048	1.0212	1.0000	1.0358	1.2571	0.1130	0.3851	0.3851	
QATAR RIAL	5.1427	0.9708	0.9910	9.5655	9.4559	1.0000	11.8870	1.0684	3.6410	3.6410	
YEMEN RIAL	0.4328	0.0817	0.0834	0.8124	0.7955	0.8041	1.0000	0.0469	0.3063	0.3063	
LIBYAN DYNAR	4.8135	0.8987	0.9278	9.0385	8.8508	0.9392	11.1263	1.0000	3.4080	3.4080	
EGYPT POUND	21.2288	4.0078	4.0809	39.8521	38.0339	4.1280	49.0885	4.4102	15.0300	15.0300	
US DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2666	0.2722	2.6522	2.5971	0.2746	3.2648	0.2934	1.0000	1.0000	
LIBYAN DYNAR	0.8678	0.1638	0.1672	1.6295	1.5956	0.1687	2.0059	0.1803	0.6144	0.6144	
YEMEN RIAL	2.5147	0.4747	0.4846	4.7219	4.6238	0.4830	5.8126	0.5234	1.7204	1.7204	
OMAN RIAL	2.0556	0.3881	0.3991	3.8800	3.7788	0.3987	4.7518	0.4271	1.4554	1.4554	
QATAR RIAL	8.4335	1.5821	1.6252	15.8358	15.5068	1.6399	19.4936	1.7520	5.9709	5.9709	
SAUDI RIAL	1.6736	0.3159	0.3225	3.1428	3.0773	0.3254	3.8884	0.3477	1.1849	1.1849	
UAE DIRHAM	2.6333	0.5348	0.5460	5.3202	5.2057	0.5309	6.5491	0.5886	2.0080	2.0080	
YEMEN RIAL	11.5812	2.1825	2.2279	21.7088	21.2578	2.2481	26.7231	2.4018	8.1853	8.1853	
LIBYAN DYNAR	24.8951	4.6997	4.7874	48.7483	48.7781	4.8409	57.5439	5.1719	17.6257	17.6257	
OMAN RIAL	51.8872	9.7915	9.9951	97.3929	95.3684	10.0857	119.8890	10.7752	36.7220	36.7220	
QATAR RIAL	2.2527	0.4253	0.4341	4.2299	4.1420	0.4387	5.2070	0.4680	1.5945	1.5945	
SAUDI RIAL	4.1319	0.7800	0.7982	7.7587	7.5975	0.7835	9.5558	0.8584	2.9254	2.9254	
UAE DIRHAM	0.7483	0.1413	0.1442	1.4051	1.3759	0.1456	1.7297	0.1858	0.6298	0.6298	
YEMEN RIAL	17.6910	3.3337	3.4051	33.2159	32.5268	3.4400	40.8919	3.6752	12.5252	12.5252	
OMAN RIAL	2.1542	0.4067	0.4151	4.0451	3.9510	0.4189	4.9794	0.4475	1.5252	1.5252	
QATAR RIAL	1.2852	0.2426	0.2477	2.4133	2.3531	0.2499	2.9707	0.2873	0.9039	0.9039	

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR									
CENTRAL BANK BULLETIN									
NOTE: NEITHER ACCESS NOR THE PUBLISHER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY ERRORS OR MISSTATE									
DEPOSIT INTEREST RATES					CRJA	CURRENCY			
CURRENCY	1 MONTH	3 M	6 M	1 YEAR		US DOLLAR	ASK	BID	
US DOLLAR	4.5000	4.6000	4.7500	4.9300		GBRITAIN STERLING	1.1518	1.1570	
GBRITAIN STERLING	3.3800	3.1900	3.0900	3.0600		GERMANY MARK	0.3972	0.3960	
EURO	3.0400	2.9000	2.8400	2.9500		SWITZERLAND FRANC	0.4951	0.4959	
GERMANY MARK	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000		FRANCE FRANC	0.1165	0.1181	
SWITZERLAND FRANC	1.1800	1.1500	1.3400	1.3400		JAPAN YEN*	0.0358	0.0368	
JAPAN YEN*	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000		HOLLAND GUILDER	0.3526	0.3544	
						ITALY LIRA*	0.0401	0.0403	
						US DOLLAR	0.7770	0.7809	
WORLD STOCK MARKETS									
STOCK MARKET	INDEX	CLOSING	LAST CLOSE	CHANGE		PRECIOUS METALS			
FRANKFURT	DAX	5094.63	5029.24	69.39		NETAL	ASK	BID	
HONG KONG	HANG SENG	10911.26	10638.86	74.38		GOLD	253.50	254.20	
LONDON	FTSE 100	6201.90	6206.60	-4.60		SILVER	5.04	5.06	
NEW YORK	DJ INDU	9020.47	9064.77	-28.30		PLATINUM	365.60	367.50	
NEW YORK	NYSE COMPOSITE	716.06	615.22	-1.14					
NEW YORK	AMEX COMPOSITE	714.31	720.91	-4.60					
NEW YORK	S&P 500	1268.98	1267.26	1.72					
NEW YORK	ROUSSEAU 2000	16084.11	16077.62	156.58					
PARIS	CAC 40	4166.36	4185.12	1.23					

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Union Chemical & Vegetable Oil Industries Company generates JD1.4m gross profit from JD10.25m of sales

THE UNION Chemical & Vegetable Oil Industries Company generated a JD1.4 million gross profit last year out of total sales that amounted to JD10.25 million, 4.6 per cent less than the figure of 1997. Board Chairman Rajai Salfiti told the shareholders that the company was able to maintain the same level of local paint sales and to increase exports by 18 per cent.

Salfiti said sales of oil in the local market went up by 220 per cent from JD1.6 million in 1997 to JD3.5 million in 1998. He added that exports to Iraq declined by 55 per cent, from JD5.5 million to JD3.3 million in 1998 because the deals under the protocol between Jordan and Iraq were cancelled last year and only those related to the oil-for-food deals were kept. Salfiti described the latter deals as being of very low profitability margin.

The chairman highlighted the following main achievements during last year:

1) Importing 9,000 tonnes of sunflower seeds and producing "Al Qarya" oil and succeeding to selling it locally within six months

2) Implementing two contracts to supply 4,000 tonnes of palm oil to Iraq with the memorandum of oil-for-food deals in addition to 1,500 tonnes remaining from 1997

Salfiti announced the completion of some projects such as the expanding the storage capacity for the oils and the seeds and the installation of equipment to remove the colour and the smell for the refining. Many amendments were carried out on the production lines to ensure low-

ering costs, curbing losses, raising efficiency and maintaining good quality.

Regarding the paint factory (Rima Lux), the chairman said the company was able to keep its share of the paint market and even achieve a slight rise in sales despite the continued decline in the size of the paint market as a whole by over 20 per cent compared to 1997 and by 50 per cent compared to 1996. He indicated that exports to the countries in the region increased by 18 per cent especially to the markets of Saudi Arabia, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Salfiti told the shareholders that an agreement was signed with an international firm specialised in alkyd production for a technology transfer that would enable the company to produce many types of alkyls needed in the local and neighbouring markets in addition to the possibility of producing other types according to demand.

On the financial side, the chairman said the company will be using JD3.5 million from the sale of debentures to repay JD1 million of capital loans and to implement expansion projects as well as increase production capacity of oil refining.

The company's financial statements at the end of last year showed net profit at JD310,000 total current assets at JD6.6 million (JD5.1 million in 1997) and total assets at JD12.20 (JD10.5 million at the end of 1997).

Current liabilities totalled JD6.2 million (JD4.9 million) and shareholders equity totalled JD5.7 million (JD5.5 million) (Al Dustour + Al Aswaq + Al Arab Al Yawm).

Troubled firm recovers from financial crisis

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — The Jordan Spinning and Weaving Company is recovering from a financial crisis caused by alleged embezzlement after a government-appointed board of directors managed to cut production costs and to find new markets.

"The company is currently making JD 500,000 a month in profit," said Pathalla Emrani, the company's vice president.

Many businessmen had expected the company to be liquidated after the government-appointed committee last year. The Criminal Court is proceeding with its trial of 17 company officials accused on embezzling JD5 million.

But Emrani, accompanying reporters on a tour of the factory on Tuesday, urged the government to reschedule the company's JD12 million debts and to cancel interest payments to enable the company regain its position in the market.

"The company needs around JD1 million to modernise its machines in order to double the production capacity and meet soaring demand," Emrani told the Jordan Times.

"During the past five months the company exported around JD1.5 million worth of goods to the international market," under a drive to explore new markets including Iraq, Syria and the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

"In five months, the company increased its daily production output to 5.5 tonnes from 2.8 tonnes," he said.

The company was planning to increase output to 7.2 tonnes a day in order to meet market demand.

Emrani said 50 more workers were added to the company's payroll, raising the number to 340 staff.

"The cost of production was lowered by 54 per cent through increasing production capacity and manufacturing spare parts locally,"

Emrani told the Jordan Times.

"The reduction in the cost of production enabled us to compete in the international markets and to establish a better name in Greece-Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom and Germany," added Emrani.

"The Palestinian National Authority offered to buy all of our production but the company refused the offer because it preferred not to depend on one market," he said.

The board — seen then by many businessmen as an attempt to liquidate the company — took over after the prosecutor general claimed a JD 5 million embezzlement.

The Criminal Court is looking into alleged fraud involving 17 men, including Maher Shukri, a former senior banker.

Emrani blamed the past crisis on frequent changes at the company's managerial level and lack of professionals working there.

S. Arabia reportedly to give 100m riyals to smaller firms

RIYADH (R) — Saudi

Arabia's minister of finance and national economy said funds of around 100 million riyals (\$26.67 million) would be made available for small and mid-size businesses, a local newspaper has reported.

Ibrahim Al Assaf said the money would be used in particular for financing micro-

projects through the Saudi Credit Bank (SCB), the English-language Arab News said.

The SCB has already

launched a pilot project to help small and mid-size enterprises and has extended loans totalling more than six billion riyals, the paper added.

It quoted Al Assaf as saying: "I am confident that this pilot project will be successful and hence I am willing to provide an extra 100 million riyals for financing them, especially micro-projects."

Al Assaf was speaking at the opening of a workshop on small and medium-sized businesses in the Saudi capital, which was organised by the ministry of finance and national economy in collaboration with the World Bank.

"These steps are in line with the kingdom's efforts to diversify income sources and expand the role of the private sector in economic development," the paper quoted SCB Director General Ali Al Sugair as saying.

Arab News said there were indications in the kingdom to suggest that the number of commercial registrations of sole proprietorships, which were mostly small and mid-size businesses, accounted for more than 94 per cent of total commercial registrations.

Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil producer and exporter, has felt the pain of declining world oil prices. The kingdom, which gains some 70 per cent of its state revenues from oil, has been making concerted efforts to diversify its economy.

A.S.E TRADE Wednesday, 17-03-99

ACCESS 4646868

Company	Open	Close	Change
BANKS			
ARAB BK	222.000	222.000	0.00%
NTL BK	1.440	1.430	-0.69%
BK OF JORDAN	1.280	1.280	-0.78%
INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK	1.280	1.280	-1.43%
THE HOUSING BK	2.800	2.800	0.00%
JO. KUWAIT BK	1.680	1.680	+0.65%
JO. ISLAMIC BK	1.680	1.670	-0.60%
PHILADELPHIA BK	0.620	0.620	0.00%
BANKS INDEX	287.540	point =	-0.06%
INSURANCE			
JERUSALEM INS	1.300	1.360	+4.62%
JO. FRENCH INS	2.670	2.700	+1.12%
AHLIA INS	1.000	1.050	+5.00%
INSURANCE INDEX	126.680	point =	+0.74%
SERVICES			
ELECTRIC POWER	1.660	1.640	-1.20%
PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	0.970	0.920	-5.10%
ALCAT	0.980	0.980	-1.43%
AL-ZARGA FOR EDU	0.980	0.980	0.00%
ARAB INT'L FOR INVS. & ED	1.930	1.950	+1.04%
UNITED FOR FINANCIAL INVE	1.080	1.080	0.00%
SERVICES INDEX	113.420	point =	+0.03%
INDUSTRY			
CEMENT	3.670	3.660	-0.27%
PHOSPHATE	2.280	2.280	-0.56%
ARAB POTASH	10.770	10.750	-0.18%
PETROLEUM REFINERY	2.980	3.000	+0.33%
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL	1.480	1.480	-0.67%
TOBACCO & CIGARET	1.900	1.800	-5.26%
PAPER & CARDBOARD	0.680	0.620	-8.82%
NTL STEEL	6.100	5.080	-16.39%
DAR AL DAWA	0.680	0.680	0.00%
MIDDLE EAST COMPLEX	0.680	0.680	0.00%
JO. STEEL	0.680	0.680	0.00%
ARAB ALUMINIUM	1.600	1.630	+1.88%
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	0.400	0.380	-5.00%
PETRO - CHEMICAL	0.260	0.260	+0.00%
CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL	1.100	1.060	-3.64%
UNIVERSAL CHEMICAL	0.920	0.920	0.00%
NTL CABLE	0.680	0.680	0.00%
SULPHO - CHEMICALS	0.420	0.420	0.00%
KAWTHER	0.470	0.490	+4.26%
EL-ZAY	1.260	1.260	0.00%
UNIVERSAL MODERN IND	0.600	0.590	-1.67%
IND. RESOURCES	0.410	0.420	+2.44%
NEW CAPLES	0.680	0.680	-1.65%
NTL ALUMINIUM	0.780	0.780	0.00%
INDUSTRY INDEX	96.350	point =	+0.02%
PARALLEL			
EXPORT BK 752	0.950	0.930	-2.11%
UNION INVS. CORP	0.870	0.830	-4.60%
ARAB FINANCIAL INVS	0.500	0.510	+2.00%
AL - EKBAL	0.870	0.870	0.00%
ADVANCED PHAR	0.610	0.510	-16.39%
MEDICAL APPLIANCES	0.430	0.430	-2.04%
AL DAWLAH	0.680	0.680	0.00%
ARAB INVESTORS	1.050	1.050	0.00%
ARAB INT'L TRADE	0.180	0.180	0.00%
SPECIALIZED INVS	0.620	0.620	0.00%
OPTICAL & AUDIAL	0.330	0.330	0.00%
INAMCO	0.160	0.160	0.00%
MIDDLE EAST PHAR	0.680	0.680	0.00%
UNION TOBACCO	0.380	0.380	0.00%
UNITED ENG. IND	0.210	0.200	-4.76%
NTL CERAMIC	0.380	0.370	-2.63%
NTL POULTRY	0.550	0.540	-1.82%
NUTRI DAR	0.740	0.740	0.00%
GRAND INDEX	182.06	point =	-0.02%

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, MARCH 18, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You hardly ever get your feelings hurt, but it could happen today. If so, the misunderstanding would most likely involve love and money. Perhaps a gift you've given your sweetheart or one you're getting. Just focus on the love, and whatever it is will be perfect.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Venus is coming into your sign today, which is excellent for love and money. You'll be lucky in just about everything, except possibly communications. Check to make sure that what the other person heard is the same as what you thought you said.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) If you're confused, you're not the only one. In fact, you could be one of the smarter people today. A person who thinks the answer is simple could be making a big mistake. Don't just follow a strong leader blindly. Watch where you're going, and make sure it's in the right direction.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You may be asked to account today for something you did recently. An older person just wants to make sure the job is getting done. Don't rely on information from a distant source. It could be erroneous. Tell them that, and you'll make extra points.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Be very careful with any large expenditure of money over the next few weeks. Looks like complications could arise, making it more trouble than its worth. In romance, commitments will become more important, and a previously frivolous relationship could become quite serious, much to your delight.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Someone you knew in the past could be coming into your life again. If so, it's like making new friends with an old friend. There are good times to talk over, but a couple of old misunderstandings need to be straightened out, too. Do that now, so you don't have to let the past mess up your future.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) There are rumours flying around your workplace. Be careful. Misinformation could cause hurt feelings. Don't gossip behind people's backs. Its never a good idea, and today it would be particularly destructive. If you wonder about something, ask people to their faces. The truth might be far different from what you imagine.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) An old misunderstanding with a loved one could resurface and need to be dealt with again. Make time for it; this time could be the last. There's a mountain of work to be done, but you should go through it quickly. Be a good listener today. It'll make everything easier.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) There may still be a few last touches to add, but that's to be expected. You can't really tell how a thing's going to look until you've got it up. There's no point being inhibited. Its all part of the creative process, to put in corrections as you notice they're needed. The overall result will look brilliant, so keep going until you get there.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) A couple of things happening today could turn out in your favour. Mercury is going retrograde into Pisces, helping you uncover old secrets. Venus, for love, is going into Taurus, helping you make romantic commitments. So you may discover a nice secret that leads to a romantic commitment.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Research is very important to you right now, along with old money. A friend's insight could set you going in a new direction. You're on a hunt for buried treasure, and you don't have far to go. Something near at hand is quite valuable. Its all in how you look at it.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) If you notice yourself pondering the past more in the next few weeks, its because Mercury is coming into your sign and its retrograde right now, so it causes contemplation of days gone by and lessons you should have learned. If you didn't learn them then, go ahead and learn them now.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, MARCH 19, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Most conditions indicate you can go full speed ahead today, and you certainly feel like doing that, but you should be a little bit careful. One assumption that you've made could turn out to be false. So don't take anything for granted. Also, be careful with your money.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Your experience pays off today in more ways than one. Your skills give you increased status, but they could also bring in more money. Something you did years ago is needed by others now. Just find out who those others are, and bingo!

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Your energy level should be high today, but you should still be careful. Don't go racing off in all directions. Looks like you're not getting strong leadership now, so you'll have to provide it yourself. Don't just follow the person who's yelling the loudest. That would be downright ridiculous.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Your interrogation should be over by today, thank heaven, and you'll be able to relax with friends soon. Make a date to do that. You need the rest and the support. You've taken on a tough challenge lately, and you may have wondered if you were doing it right. If you can avoid risking money, your chances improve considerably.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Although most conditions look good for you, there is one area you need to watch. Looks like a partner, possibly an expert you've hired, isn't quite everything he or she is supposed to be. Check out the credentials before you entrust this person with too much responsibility.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You're pretty good with money, but other people's money is more of a challenge. You have to deal not only with the numbers, but also with them, and their anxiety. That could be your assignment for today, don't let somebody else's emergency ruin your concentration. If all is not as it appears to be, it's not your fault. Do the best you can.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) There's a link between love and money today. If you pool your money with

a loved one's and go shopping together, you could find something exquisite. It would most and exceed all expectations. The perfect item. Of course, it costs away more than either of you can afford, but together anything is possible.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) A minor insurance could arise in the workplace today. Somebody has an idea and doesn't want to hear any reasons — even sensible ones — why it shouldn't be implemented. But if the reasons make dollars and cents, you might have to be the one to break the bad news. If the idea will save or make money, go for it. If it won't, don't.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Your romantic relationship may have taken on a whole new character during the last few days. It's been a good week for working together on a big project, and that can also raise problems. If you can do it, though, it forms a bond that's tough to break. But you may have to let go of one of your fantasies in the process.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) People could be congregating at your house, which is where the action is. But if you want to be with one special person, you might wish the others would make themselves scarce. All's well that ends well, but watch for one minor difficulty. Don't overstep trying to impress these folks. Let them pick in for the chips and dip.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Just when you think you had everything figured out, somebody throws you a curve. A person you thought you had in your pocket could give you unexpected trouble. This is somebody you care about, so you'll have to be nice, but don't just pretend to listen. Really listen. He or she might be telling you something you should hear.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Embarrassingly enough, it looks like the focus is on money today. It's only embarrassing because you'd rather be giving than receiving, and it looks like you're receiving right now. This is a situation you've long wished would happen, so don't get flustered. Relax and enjoy it.

JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE

Come to where the style is. DAJANI JEWELLERS

Many villas and apartments for rent and sale
Furnished & Unfurnished
For more information call:
Abdoun Real Estate
5920605/5920609/079530007
Web Site is
www.abdoun.com.jo

STUDIO HAIG
Professional quality in 1 hour service
Develop your colour film at our shop and get:
* **JUMBO photo size 30% larger.**
* **Free enlargement 20 x 30 cm.**
Shmelsairi - Opposite
Grindlays Bank.
Phone: 5604042
Swellfish Tel: 822891

Your Address In Amman
CRYSTAL
Quality Serviced Suites
* One & Two Bedrooms * Fully
Equipped Kitchens * Daily &
Long Stay * Reasonable Rates
5th Circle
Tel.: 5692672 - Fax: 5674551
e-mail: crystal@go.com.jo

FOR RENT
Deluxe Villas and Apartments
SANABEL
Real Estate
SWEIFYEH
A. Hajarat Complex
Tel. 5864230 - 5865167
Mobile: 079/537588

Budget
Car Rental & Leasing
WE RENT LESS
— DAILY —
— WEEKLY —
— MONTHLY —
Telephone: 962-6-5698131
Fax: 962-6-5673312
P.O.Box: 960486
Amman-11196, Jordan
E-mail: budget@go.com.jo
An Independent Budget System Licensee

TO ADVERTISE IN THIS SECTION CALL
5684311 - 5699634 EXT. 42
&
Fax: 5693337

TO ADVERTISE IN THIS SECTION CALL
5684311 - 5699634 EXT. 42
&
Fax: 5696183

Bayerischer Hof
German Restaurant
OPEN FOR LUNCH & DINNER
FROM 12:30 P.M. UNTIL 12:30 A.M.
German coffee and cakes served all day
Swellfish - Al Hamra Street Tel: 5819730 / 5810811
PO Box 6555, Amman-11118 Jordan

Amra Forum Hotel
At 6th Circle
Tel.: 5510001
Shehrazad Restaurant
Over Amman by Night
at the Amra Roof Top Restaurant.
your Friendly Host

Big names to stroll on in Cup Winners Cup

PARIS (AFP) — Barring a miracle, the remaining big names should take their place in the European Cup Winners' Cup semifinals Thursday before the death knell sounds for what has become an increasingly unglamorous event.

English holders Chelsea, Lazio of Italy and Russia's Lokomotiv Moscow all posted big wins in their first legs a fortnight ago, ensuring that the tournament will belatedly comprise some glamour ties in the semis.

Chelsea's European experience should stand them in good stead as they head for Valerenga in Norway, three goals to the good from the first leg at Stamford Bridge.

Knocked out of the FA Cup last week by Manchester United and beaten at home by West Ham in the Premiership, Gianluca Vialli's side are now focusing in on becoming the first side ever to retain the Cup Winners Cup.

Several sides, including Arsenal and Paris St. Germain in recent seasons, have failed at the final hurdle.

But Chelsea have enjoyed quite a Cup Winners Cup love affair. They won the trophy for the first time back in 1971 beating Real Madrid in a final replay and Valerenga should not over-ly test them.

The Blues had an unhappy mid-winter visit to Tromso on the Arctic Circle for their last trip to Norway, losing 3-2 in a snowstorm after Vialli rescued an apparently hopeless situation with two goals.

But buoyed by goals from Babayaro, Zola and Wise in the first match, the Londoners should be able to spend Thursday evening in the comfort zone afforded by the size of that home victory.

Vialli expects his side to bounce back from their recent defeats and add to their growing silverware collection under the Italian's stewardship.

"I expect a great reaction from the players and myself as well. It's possibly the first time we've had a bad time so it's a test for me as well," said Vialli, now no doubt dreaming of a final showdown with his Lazio compatriots.

Chelsea's injury problems are mounting as the season enters its final phase with Marcel Desailly doubtful after picking up a hamstring problem against West Ham. Long-term injury victims Gustavo Poyet and Pierluigi Casiraghi are definitely out.

But Vialli has defended his decision not to sign any replacements.

"The club asked me if I wanted a replacement and I said I was happy with the squad I had at the time. If there's a mistake, it's my mistake — but four days ago everything was going well."

Lazio, the biggest threat standing in Chelsea's way, ought to coast through in Rome against the Greeks of Panionios whom they crushed 4-0 in Athens.

The Rome outfit are unbeaten in 15 matches in the Serie A, although they have had to put their championship

champagne on ice after dropping two points at tailenders Empoli on Sunday.

Coach Sven Goran Eriksson is not ringing the alarm bells as a result, however, and can afford the luxury of giving Christian Vieri a rest if he so wishes as the Italian international striker, a late sub against Empoli, is not match fit.

Even if Vieri doesn't start, Lazio have enough firepower in the likes of Chilean star Marcelo Salas to complete a triumph which appears a foregone conclusion.

Lokomotiv Moscow like Chelsea and Lazio, have one foot in the last four after blasting Maccabi Haifa of Israel 3-0 at home thanks to a Zaza Dzhanashia hat-trick.

Haifa have done well to reach this stage, given that they were handed what was on paper a difficult first-round tie against Paris Saint Germain.

But Lokomotiv have proved a tougher obstacle to crack than the French and they should progress without much trouble as they seek to become the first — and last — Russian winners of the competition.

Spain's Real Mallorca host the virtual unknowns of Croatia's Varteks Varazdin in the remaining tie — the only one whose outcome remains in the balance with the first match having finished goalless.

Mallorca tuned up for the match with a 2-1 weekend win at Atletico Madrid which keeps them in the Spanish title frame in fourth place, five points behind pace-setters Barcelona.

Parma eclipse Bordeaux as Marseille keep French flag flying

PARIS (AFP) — Italy, France and Spain enjoyed mixed fortunes in the UEFA Cup on Wednesday as Parma turned in the performance of the night, thrashing Bordeaux 6-0 to book a place in the last four.

Bologna became a second Italian name in the hat for the semifinal draw, ousting another French outfit in the shape of Lyon 3-2 on aggregate despite losing the away leg 2-0.

But Roma failed to make it an Italian hat-trick when they made a surprise exit after sliding to a 2-1 home defeat to Atletico Madrid, who came from behind to register a 4-2 aggregate triumph.

Marseille kept the French flag flying in the other tie, holding out for an uninspiring goalless draw at Celta Vigo to advance 2-1 on aggregate.

Parma, who lifted the trophy in 1995, are gunning for success on two fronts as they lie second in Serie A behind Lazio.

And on Tuesday evening's evidence, they are the side to fear, having brushed aside a Bordeaux side sitting proudly atop the French first division table.

Beaten 2-1 in France, Parma played Bordeaux off the pitch at the Tardini stadium, with Enrico Chiesa scoring twice and Parma's Argentinians Hernan Crespo (2), Joan Sebastian Veron and Abel Balbo getting the rest in a match which was one-way traffic throughout.

The Italian side were simply in a different class to their French opponents, who gave up the ghost once they went three goals down in the face of the Italians' clinical finishing.

Crespo hit the first in the 37th minute and although Bordeaux nearly levelled in the 41st minute when Herve Aliche sent in a barrelling drive, Chiesa made it 2-0 just before the break with a stunning shot from distance.

Three minutes after the restart, Veron blasted home a free-kick from the left and, as the French surrendered, Chiesa poked home the fourth through keeper Ulrich Rame's legs.

Parma's fifth goal came when Frenchman Lilian Thuram punted the ball upfield to Paolo Vanoli, who headed on for Crespo. He nonchalantly trapped the ball before guiding it home.

French defender Nisa Saveljic then handballed in the final seconds and substitute Balbo fired home the penalty to complete the rout for Parma's biggest ever win in European competition.

Bologna's success was a far more muted affair as they just survived a Lyon onslaught after conceding two first half goals before bolting the door on the French side's hopes.

The French were much the better side and played the Italians off the park in the opening period.

They took a deserved lead on 16 minutes as they went in



AS Roma captain Francesco Totti (L) is brought down by Oscar Mena of Atletico Madrid, during their UEFA Cup quarterfinal second leg soccer match at the Olympic stadium (AFP photo)



Parma's Argentinian Hermann Crespo (C, L) is celebrated by teammates after he scored his team's first goal against Bordeaux during their UEFA Cup quarterfinal second leg match in Parma. Parma won 6-0 (AFP photo)

WBC claims Lewis was robbed of 'clear victory'

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — The World Boxing Council (WBC) claimed Tuesday its heavyweight champion, Lennox Lewis, was robbed of his "clear victory" against World Boxing Association (WBA) rival Evander Holyfield in their unification battle.

Britain's Lewis outclassed American Evander Holyfield for 12 rounds in New York Saturday only to be denied the undisputed world heavyweight boxing title when judges scored the fight a draw in a decision that triggered a major controversy.

"Lewis was unjustly robbed of a clear victory," the Mexico City-based WBC said in a statement, calling for a rematch with "clearer rules."

It said that Lewis "massacred Holyfield with an endless number of devastating blows."

The WBC joined widespread criticism of WBA-appointed Eugenia Williams, who gave the fight to Holyfield.

"Our explanation is the little experience Ms. Williams has for a fight of this level and an excessive favoritism for a boxer of her own country."

Williams complained that she had a poor view and mainly saw Lewis' back during the hotly criticised fifth round in which Lewis landed 43 punches to 11 for Holyfield but still lost to the American on Williams' scorecard.



Tottenham Hotspur's French forward David Ginola (L) is held back by Barnsley's Nicky Eaden during their FA Cup quarterfinal match (AFP photo)

Ginola grabs glittering glory goal

LONDON (AFP) — Tottenham's French star David Ginola scored a breathtakingly brilliant goal to secure a 1-0 win and book a place for the London side in the FA Cup semifinals at first division Barnsley Tuesday night.

Ginola's 68th minute winner to kill off Barnsley's FA Cup dreams was spellbinding, a work of pure genius which will be recalled for a long time after by those who witnessed it, Tottenham and Barnsley fans alike.

Barnsley had been reduced to 10 men just nine minutes prior to what will arguably be goal of the season.

Defender Adie Moses of Barnsley saw red for two fouls on Ginola in the space of a minute.

At that point the Frenchman had shown only glimpses of his talent, although he had created a glorious opportunity for

Ramon Vega. The Swiss defender not only spurned the chance but missed the ball completely. Ginola finally decided to illuminate the hitherto dull proceedings with just 22 minutes remaining.

It wouldn't have mattered if Barnsley had 22 men on the pitch at the time as the Frenchman turned on the flair to twist and shimmy his way past a series of despairing challenges before applying the coolest of finishes.

Four tormented Barnsley players were left trailing in his wake as he started a run which began a few yards inside the Barnsley half and ended with a curled right-foot shot which comfortably beat the helpless Tony Bullock in the Barnsley goal.

Ginola received applause from all corners of the ground when he was eventually substituted by Andy Sinton with just a minute

remaining.

In the early stages both sides had appeared tentative which was hardly surprising with a semifinal place against Newcastle at stake.

Nicky Eaden had Ginola under close scrutiny in the early stages as both sides hardly mustered an attack of note.

Bullock then made an easy save from Chris Armstrong, who should really have done better with his shot.

While Bullock did not have much to do, opposing number Ian Walker saw even less action, making just one save before the interval as both attacks lacked sufficient service.

However, Spurs captain Sol Campbell had to make one crucial tackle on Bruce Dyer after a gaffe from Vega had given the Barnsley striker a sight on goal.

<p>CINEMA TEL:463-4144 PHILADELPHIA '1'</p> <p>Tom Hanks & Edward Burns ...in</p> <p>SAVING PRIVATE RYAN</p> <p>Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:15, 9:15</p>	<p>CINEMA TEL:463-4144 PHILADELPHIA '2'</p> <p>Robert De Niro... in</p> <p>RONIN</p> <p>Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30</p>	<p>CINEMA TEL:5699238 PLAZA</p> <p>Comedian Adel Imam... in</p> <p>AL ZA'EEM</p> <p>Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30</p>	<p>CINEMA TEL:5677420 CONCORDE</p> <p>Tom Hanks & Edward Burns ...in</p> <p>SAVING PRIVATE RYAN</p> <p>Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:15, 9:15</p> <p>CONCORDE 2</p> <p>ALWAD MAHROUS</p> <p>BTA' AL WAZIR</p>	<p>CINEMA TEL:5934793 GALLERIA 1</p> <p>ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria</p> <p>DANCE WITH ME</p> <p>Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45</p>	<p>CINEMA TEL:5934793 GALLERIA 2</p> <p>ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria</p> <p>Michael Douglas ...in</p> <p>A PERFECT MURDER</p> <p>Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45</p>	<p>Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 4625155</p> <p>CLOSED</p>
---	--	--	---	--	--	---

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Sports

Rockets have loss to Blaze

FOR SA

1998 HONDA

49

PIR & RINIA

SECRETARY N

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



7 countries in taekwondo competition starting today

AMMAN — Around 390 taekwondo players from seven Arab and Asian countries will mark the 40-day mourning period of the passing away of His Majesty King Hussein by competing in a two-day international championship starting Thursday. Players from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Chinese Taipei and Jordan will participate in the First Amman International Championship for men and women, organised by Jordan's Champions Centre for taekwondo at the Palace of Sports. Twenty-two international referees from Hong Kong, Egypt, Yemen, Qatar, Cyprus, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Lebanon, Sweden and Jordan will be officiating the matches.

Surface maintenance to cost JD186,000

AMMAN — The Greater Jerusalem Foundation will begin maintenance and rehabilitation of sport facilities at Al Hussein Youth City as preparations for the Pan-Arab Games after the firm won a JD186,000 tender. Work will include replacing rubber floors of the Sports Palace, handicapped centre and weightlifting hall, as well as conducting electricity maintenance and renovation and construction works at the shooting club.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

Rockets avenge embarrassing loss to Blazers; Cavs win

HOUSTON (R) — A Houston Rockets team focused on avenging a humiliating loss put together a solid effort from start to finish and beat the Portland Trail Blazers 101-93 on Tuesday.

Hakeem Olajuwon scored 21 points to lead five players in double figures and the Rockets used a big third quarter to put away the Blazers, who had embarrassed the Rockets 111-71 earlier this month in Portland.

"I like the way we won the game," Olajuwon said. "It was a total team effort. Everyone was focused on one goal, winning." Scottie Pippen had 18 points, seven rebounds, nine assists and three steals for the Rockets, who have won six of their last eight games.

Charles Barkley contributed 15 points and nine rebounds, including the 12,000th rebound of his career to become just the 15th player in NBA history to reach the plateau.

"God has blessed me with great talents and it's an honour to accomplish it," Barkley said of his milestone rebound total.

Houston held a slim 54-51 advantage at the half but exploded with an 18-4 run to start the third quarter. The Rockets outscored Portland 26-12 in the period to take a commanding 80-63 lead into the fourth.

In Toronto, new coach, same old New Jersey Nets.

A day after Don Casey replaced fired John Calipari as head coach, the Nets shot a miserable 37 per cent and failed to show up on defence in a 100-85 loss to the Toronto Raptors. "A change of coach is not a magic wand," Casey said. Vince Carter had 20

points and 15 rebounds. Doug Christie scored 18 points and Dee Brown added 17 as Toronto led by as many as 27 points and coasted to victory.

In Miami, Tim Hardaway scored 11 of his 24 points in the fourth quarter as the Heat recorded their 11th straight home victory, a 94-85 win over the Washington Wizards. Alonzo Mourning added 19 points and 14 rebounds for the Heat, who have won five straight games and 16 of 18.

The Wizards nearly erased a 20-point second-half deficit, pulling within 82-77 in the final period. But Hardaway took over, helping to build the Miami lead back to 88-77.

Mitch Richmond scored 22 points and Juwan Howard added 18 for Washington.

In Sacramento, Tim Duncan had 29 points and 12 rebounds to lead the San Antonio Spurs to their best offensive effort of the season, a 121-109 victory over the Kings.

Mario Elie added 23 points and Avery Johnson collected 17 points and 15 assists for San Antonio, which had all five starters score at least 17.

San Antonio's winning streak reached eight games, their longest in almost three years.

In Indiana, Dikembe Mutombo pulled down 20 rebounds and made a key play in the closing seconds to help the Atlanta Hawks post an 85-79 victory over the Pacers. Unable to grab the rebound of a missed free throw by teammate Mookie Blaylock, Mutombo batted the ball off Indiana's Jalen Rose and out of bounds with 11 seconds left.

The Hawks, clinging to an 81-79 lead, got the ball back and Steve Smith and Blaylock each made two free throws to seal Atlanta's fourth straight win.

In Cleveland, Shawn Kemp scored 20 points and Brevin Knight added 19 and handed out nine assists to lead the Cavaliers to a 86-82 victory over the Detroit Pistons.

Andrew Delecq, in his first home game since being traded to Cleveland, grabbed a career-high 17 rebounds after averaging just over four a game for Boston.

Grant Hill had 23 points and 12 rebounds for Detroit.

At Minnesota, Shaquille O'Neal scored 24 points. Glenn Rice added 22 and Kobe Bryant 20 to lead the Los Angeles Lakers to a 107-101 victory over the Timberwolves.

Rice and Bryant combined for 12 key points in the final 4-1/2 minutes as the Lakers, again playing without Dennis Rodman, pulled away down the stretch.

In New York, Latrell Sprewell improved on the previous night's season-best 28-point performance by scoring 31 as the Knicks cruised to a 113-89 rout of the woeful L.A. Clippers.

Allan Houston added 24 points as the Knicks won their third straight at the expense of the 1-20 Clippers.

In Seattle, Vin Baker's tip-in with half a second left lifted the SuperSonics to an 87-85 victory over the Vancouver Grizzlies, whose losing streak reached 13 games.

With the score tied 85-85, Detlef Schrempf's lay-up rolled off the rim, but Baker squeezed through a pair of defenders and tipped home the winning shot. He finished with a season-high 31 points on 13-of-19 shooting for Seattle.

In Milwaukee, Cliff Robinson led six players in double figures with 20 points as the Phoenix Suns rolled to a 110-92 victory over the Bucks.

Phoenix used a 15-0 first-quarter run to pull away and never looked back. The Suns led 33-15 after the first quarter and 63-36 at the half.

"This was the first blowout we had this year," Phoenix coach Danny Ainge said.

Samaranch firmly in charge after stunning vote of confidence

LAUSANNE (AFP) — Beleaguered International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Juan Antonio Samaranch firmly secured his position as head of the movement when he won a sweeping vote of confidence from IOC members here on Wednesday.

The 78-year-old had asked for a show of support in his leadership before the start the most dramatic meeting ever held by the IOC — one that will decide the fate of six members embroiled in the Salt Lake City scandal — amid rumours of top officials plotting to oust him.

Samaranch, who has ruled the Olympic movement for 18 years, decided to crush any opposition by deciding to put his support within the movement to the test with a secret vote.

It was a gamble that paid off with stunning success.

With 90 members voting, 88 backed the former Spanish diplomat. Only two voiced opposition. There was one abstention and one blank voting slip.

Samaranch left the hall while the vote was being taken and when it was over he swept back into the room to a standing ovation.

Belgian executive board member Jacques Rogge, tipped as a possible successor to Samaranch, said afterwards: "The outcome is good for the Olympic movement. The decision to conduct a secret ballot was a good one. It showed the true strength of the president's support from the members."

Samaranch has repeatedly refused "to stand down following the corruption scandal that has severely tarnished the once-golden image of the Olympics."

Wednesday's vote will now allow him to stay on until his retirement in 2001.

With doubts over the future of the leadership put to rest, the meeting began the job of trying the six members facing expulsion for their part in the Salt Lake City corruption scandal.

Immediately after the Salt Lake affair broke late last year, IOC vice-president Dick Pound was put in charge of a six-man inquiry team.

The Pound inquiry uncovered more than a score of cases where members were found to have broken the strict IOC code of ethics.

Six of them should be expelled, said the report

and Samaranch made clear that he wanted the members to show no mercy.

"We must root out all forms of inappropriate or unethical behaviour among our membership and expel those members (as) recommended by the executive board," said Samaranch at the start of Wednesday morning's hearing.

He accused the six of almost bringing the IOC to its knees.

"No-one thought that certain of our members would act in a manner which would eventually bring the IOC into disrepute — in fact into a crisis which has nearly destroyed the reputation and credibility of all its members and the organisation itself," he told the session.

Pound earlier warned that if all six are not thrown out, he and the rest



International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF) president Primo Nebiolo (L) shakes hands with International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Juan Antonio Samaranch in Lausanne. The 78-year-old Samaranch won today a sweeping vote of confidence from IOC members before the start of the most dramatic meeting ever held by the IOC (AFP photo)

IOC expels six members in Olympic corruption scandal

LAUSANNE (AFP) — Six International Olympic Committee members were expelled here Wednesday for their role in the Salt Lake City corruption scandal.

They are Agustín Arroyo of Ecuador, General Zein El Abdin Ahmed of the Sudan, Congo's Jean Claude Ganga, Mali's Lamine Keita, Chile's Sergio Santander Fantini and Paul Wallwork of Samoa.

All were found guilty by a six-man IOC inquiry of accepting excessive gifts or cash for themselves or family members during Salt Lake City's successful bid for the 2002 Winter Olympics. The 11-strong IOC executive board had recommended their expulsion, which was confirmed by the IOC at an afternoon press conference.

IOC First Vice-President Pal Schmitt was given the task of telling the six, waiting in a nearby room, that they were out.

"All of them were very sad and upset. Mr Wallwork was crying," said Schmitt.

Four other members resigned earlier this year rather than face the IOC court and 10 others, including the powerful South Korean IOC Vice-President Kim Un-yong, were censured for their behaviour.

IOC vice-president Dick Pound, who headed the corruption inquiry, said the Kim case was still open and

that he was still under investigation. Pound said Wednesday's expulsions showed the IOC was determined to change.

"We are starting to deliver, to put our house in order," he said.

"We are at the end of the beginning, or near the end of the beginning. I think we have a fair amount of work ahead of us to recover and regroup and move on. I think this is a good start and while it was painful for us to do it I think had we not done it would have been very hard to move forward."

It is the first time in the IOC's 105-year history that members have been thrown out for corruption.

All six pleaded their case before the special session of 91 members meeting here.

Any hopes of sympathy from their fellow members were quickly dispelled by IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch.

Before the hearing began, the 78-year-old Samaranch told the session that his job was clear.

"We must clean our house. We must root out all forms of inappropriate or unethical behaviour among our membership and expel those members recommended by the executive board," said Samaranch.

He accused the six of almost bringing the IOC to its knees.

"No-one thought that certain of

our members would act in a manner which would eventually bring the IOC into disrepute — in fact into a crisis which has nearly destroyed the reputation and credibility of all its members and the organisation itself," he said.

The verdicts were reached by secret ballot. Samaranch had wanted a show of hands but it was bitterly opposed by the rank and file and they swept the floor to have their vote kept secret.

After the accused had pleaded their case, Samaranch and Pound warned the members that tough action needed to be taken and not to go soft.

Pound told them that while they may have felt some compassion for the accused members they should not shirk from their task. "We have to keep a clean house," he told them.

Several of the members were clearly unhappy at what they saw as strong armed tactics.

"Justice was not done here today. Only the weakest were picked up," complained Italian IOC member Franco Carraro.

"What has happened to those who tempted them," he asked.

Thai member Nat Indrapana made an impassioned plea to the session.

"Let us put an end to this blood letting. It is time to draw a line and move on," he urged.

of the executive board will resign en masse.

Samaranch said that after the trial of the six accused is over, the members had to take steps to ensure such a thing could never happen again and that public confidence in

the movement is restored.

Samaranch put forward five several ideas that he wanted the session to support.

The key was the setting up of a special study group to investigate the workings of the IOC from

top to bottom.

This group would examine the IOC and all of its structures and procedures and recommend the changes we should make to our organisation so that we can move forward on a much stronger

footing, in tune with society and its expectations for the leadership of the Olympic movement," said Samaranch.

He added that the group will be 20 to 24 strong with half of them coming from outside the IOC.

FOR SALE

1983 HONDA ACCORD

Sunroof, a/c, four doors, new tyres, manual 5 speed shift. 55,000 km. Excellent condition
Duty Not Paid - Call 5521431

SECRETARY NEEDED

With the following qualifications:

- Fluent in English & Arabic.
- Shorthand & typing skills required.
- Experience preferable.

Qualified candidates could send their CV to Fax: 5660724 or call Tel.: 5660726

CREPES SPECIALITIES Live Music On The 22nd of MARCH
GRAND OPENING
= 49'ers =
PUB & RESTAURANT
First Drink on The House
Sweilayah - behind Istiklal Bookshop
Tel: 5816690 Cellular 079/571026

NFL owners create 32nd team for LA

PHOENIX (AFP) — National Football League owners voted 29-2 here Tuesday to expand to Los Angeles, returning to the second largest United States television market from which two other clubs fled.

The expansion team was granted provided the city meets stadium and finance criteria within six months, goals all but assured with a team valued at hundreds of millions of dollars on the line.

NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue disclosed the vote to return to an area that once hosted two teams but has been without any NFL club since the Raiders went to Oakland and Rams left for St. Louis in 1995.

Houston was also a candidate and had a single ownership group in place with a \$350 million stadium one-third complete in the fourth-largest U.S. television market, with 1.6 million homes.

TOYOTA LAND CRUISER FOR SALE
(Duty unpaid)
Excellent condition
Colour white, year end 1994, 245,000kms, 4 WD, petrol, air condition, radio cassette, power steering, 4500 cc. Price: JD5,000
For more details, please call 5688646
From 8a.m.-2 p.m. on Thursday, Sat. & Sunday

Beit Al Bawadi
Happy Mother's day
Sale
First Quality
Ceramic, Rugs, Embroideries
20 March till 25 March 99
Beit Al Bawadi in Abdoun
Hours: 8:00 am - 7:00 pm
Call us 5930070

Reliable, clean, scratch-free
E6 slide processing by professional. Push & pull processing available, with or without mounts.
Call 464 1559 for information.

FURNISHED APARTMENT FOR RENT
Deluxe fully furnished apartment. Consists of three bedrooms, one master with two sunny terraces, two bathrooms, modern kitchen, spacious dining and guest area. Central heating, telephone, colour TV, video and satellite, water reservoir, 2nd floor. Safe and quiet residential area. Location: 3rd Circle, Jabel Amman, near Al Khalil Hospital, and the French embassy.
Call 632755 from 10 a.m. - 10 p.m. daily.
N.B. No water problem

OFFICE BUILDING FOR RENT
- Independent two story villa.
- Around 500 sq. meters with garden along with 600 sq. meters private parking lot.
- Newly renovated, semi-furnished by present tenant.
- Located in a prime location in Shemesani
- Suitable for diplomatic missions, regional offices, banks or other.
For further details Tel 079-543348

Shas leader Deri convicted of corruption

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Rabbi Arieh Deri, a former interior minister who heads Israel's third largest party, was convicted Wednesday of corruption in a verdict that rocked the country two months before national elections.

Deri, 40, was found guilty of accepting bribes, fraud and breach of trust between 1985 and 1990 when he was director general and then minister at the interior ministry. The trial lasted five years.

A leader of the ultra-Orthodox Sephardi party Shas and one of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's most important political allies, Deri faces a possible prison term and fines, although the sentence will not be announced until next week at the earliest.

Deri's lawyer said he would appeal the conviction to the supreme court once the sentence is set. If his conviction is upheld, Deri will be ineligible to serve as a minis-

ter for 10 years. "We were surprised by the gravity of the ruling, which we reject completely," said attorney Navot Tel Tzur.

Deri's wife, Yafa, broke into sobs when the verdict was read but the bearded and bespectacled rabbi withheld comment.

Shas held 10 seats in the outgoing 120-member parliament and has long played the role of powerbroker in government as the main representative of Israel's large but underprivileged community of Sephardim — Jews from North African and Middle Eastern origin.

Netanyahu, who is lagging behind opposition Labour Party chief Ehud Barak in opinion polls and needs the Sephardi vote to win reelection, responded cautiously to the verdict.

"Israel is a state of law and we must respect the court's ruling," he said.

"I hope no one will rejoice over Arieh's conviction," he said, before calling on Deri's

supporters "to show restraint and respect the law."

Hundreds of extra police were deployed around the Jerusalem courthouse to handle possible unrest from Shas militants after the verdict.

But just a few dozen people turned out and only a few minor scuffles were reported after they received telephone death threats Tuesday.

Police also placed additional bodyguards around Tzema and another judge after they received telephone death threats Tuesday.

Deri was found guilty of accepting \$155,000 in bribes from business associates between 1985 and 1990 when he served first as director general of the interior ministry and then minister.

He used the bribes to help purchase apartments in Jerusalem and finance trips abroad with his wife, the court found.

Deri was also convicted of fraud concerning the use of state funds to bail out religious institutions and busi-

ness activities controlled by him and three associates who were also convicted.

The three-judge panel found Deri innocent on some other charges including falsifying corporate documents.

Deri still faces indictment on other charges of corruption, notably involving the ill-fated 1997 nomination by Netanyahu of a political crony as attorney general in a deal allegedly designed to obtain a plea-bargain in Deri's bribery trial.

Deri's decade-old legal problems have captivated Israelis' attention and in a sign of the case's political implications Wednesday's verdict was exceptionally broadcast live on national radio.

Television cameras were barred from the courtroom but the two main networks broadcast special programmes on the Deri affair.

The verdict came exactly two months before May 17 general elections and could have a major impact for

Shas, which has served in virtually every government — right or left — since its creation in 1984 and had two ministers in Netanyahu's cabinet.

Shas supporters claim Deri's conviction is the latest sign of long-standing persecution of Sephardim by the secular Ashkenazi, or European, elite which has traditionally dominated Israeli politics.

"We'll win 20 seats in parliament this time," said one supporter of Shas, which runs a vast network of welfare and education programmes in the Sephardi community.

But television analyst Hanan Cristal disagreed.

"The verdict won't shake the Shas hard-core, but the corruption charges could alienate the silent majority of Shas voters," he said.

Analysts said many former Shas voters could defect to the new centre party headed by the Iraqi-born ex-defence minister Yitzhak Mordechai.



Israeli commission begins redrawing Jerusalem borders

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel's interior ministry formed a panel Wednesday to prepare for expanding the borders of Jerusalem westward in a move designed to boost the Jewish population of the Arab city.

The commission will examine the annexation of land from neighbouring Israeli regions to the Jerusalem municipality, interior ministry spokeswoman Tova Ellinson said in a statement.

The expansion of Jerusalem was approved by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government in June and drew protests from residents of several residential suburbs targeted for annexation to the occupied city.

The commission appointed Wednesday will initially look at non-built up areas that could be attached to Jerusalem, Ellinson said.

In taking its decision in June, the government said a key aim was to boost the Jewish population of Jerusalem, which is divided between a Jewish western sector and Arab east Jerusalem — a zone occupied from Jordan in 1967 and later illegally annexed.

Since 1967, the Palestinian population of the city has risen 164 per cent while the Jewish population grew only 113 per cent, according to official Israeli statistics.

The city's current population is about 600,000, around 200,000 of them Palestinians living in Arab east Jerusalem.

Another aim of the expansion plan, which the right-wing government hopes will eventually include annexing parts of the occupied West Bank to Jerusalem, is to provide new sources of tax revenue for the cash-strapped municipal government.

Under the Oslo peace accords, Israel agreed to negotiate the status of the city, but Netanyahu has ruled out any concessions.

Palestinian officials say Israel strengthening settlements

AL BIREH (R) — Palestinian officials on Wednesday accused Israel of speeding up Jewish settlement building in order to strengthen its hold on West Bank land before talks on a final peace settlement.

"We have found that the Israeli government has accelerated the construction of settlements, especially in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, in order to create facts on the ground and grab more occupied land before final status talks begin," said Palestinian negotiator Khalil Tofajki.

Tofajki, who monitors settlement trends, told a news conference that according to his estimates the settler population was growing at an annual rate of nine per cent.

Three days after U.S. Middle East envoy Dennis Ross called Israeli settlement "very destructive to the pursuit of peace," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday pledged to strengthen Jewish settlement in the West Bank.

Such promises have irked Palestinians who see settlement expansion as an illegal violation of Israeli-Palestinian peace accords.

"They are swallowing up our lands for settlements and depleting our natural resources," said Palestinian Environment Minister Youssef Abu Safieh.

Israeli peace groups and Palestinians have said several new settlements have sprouted on hillsides throughout the West

Bank under the guise of natural growth.

Around 160,000 Jewish settlers live in roughly 150 settlements throughout the occupied West Bank and Gaza, which Israel occupied in 1967.

Under the 1993 Oslo peace deals, the issue of settlements was slated for discussion during final status talks that were meant to be completed by May of this year.

Tofajki said Israel was also accelerating the approval of settlement construction plans frozen by the previous Labour government and that Israel was "building new settlements and not just expanding existing ones as it claims."

A U.S. embassy spokesman in Tel Aviv said on Tuesday that

Washington was troubled by settlement expansion beyond existing boundaries.

"All building is within the municipal boundaries of these communities," said Netanyahu's senior adviser David Bar-Ilan.

Eli Cohen, a former Israeli defence ministry adviser on settlements, told the Jerusalem Post newspaper last week the government had issued permits in 1998 that would enable construction of tens of thousands of new settlement units.

Mossi Raz, head of the left-wing Israeli Peace Now movement, said the right-wing Israeli government had built 16 new settlements in the last five months in the West Bank and 20 in total since last year.

Lebanese woman wounded in Israeli attack

TYRE (AFP) — A Lebanese woman was wounded Wednesday and eight homes damaged when Israeli aircraft bombed a suspected Hizbollah guerrilla stronghold north of the Jewish state's south Lebanon "security zone," police said.

Fighter-bombers fired 16 missiles around Zibqine and Aaishiyeh villages in three passes that took place within half an hour beginning at 5:30 p.m., according to police.

Wassila Khalil, a woman in her 60s, was wounded during the first raid which caught her outside, and taken to the government hospital in Tyre, hospital officials said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Barak voted premier by students

TEL AVIV (AFP) — In mock elections that have served in the past as an accurate barometer of Israeli voting trends, Tel Aviv high school students chose Labour Party leader Ehud Barak for prime minister Wednesday over incumbent Benjamin Netanyahu. In the vote at Tel Aviv's Blich High School, Barak trounced Netanyahu for the premiership with 56 per cent of the ballots to only 25 per cent for the prime minister and the rest spread out among other candidates. The mock vote at Blich has become a tradition prior to Israeli elections and most years the students accurately predicted the result of the national polls. Their only failure came ahead of the May 1996 elections when they forecast that Labour incumbent Shimon Peres would be reelected.

Police arrest suspected bombmakers

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian police have arrested a gang of four or five suspected bombmakers for the militant Islamic group Hamas in the Gaza Strip, security officials said on Wednesday. The gang members, all of them from the south of Gaza, were arrested three weeks ago in possession of commercial materials that could be used to make a bomb but before an explosive device could be manufactured, an official said. The official refused to specify exactly how many men were arrested and named only one of the gang as Imad Mohammad Ali, 22, from the Bureij refugee camp.

Arafat to visit Moscow on April 6

MOSCOW (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat is to visit Moscow on April 6 for talks with Russian leaders, ITAR-TASS reported Wednesday. The report quoted Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian number two, as saying that the talks were part of Arafat's consultations on whether to proclaim a Palestinian state when the interim autonomy period expires.

Turkey seeks measures against Med-TV

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey on Wednesday asked diplomatic representatives of Germany and Britain in Ankara to take measures against Med-TV, which it says provoked the recent string of bloody attacks to hit the country since the capture of Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan last month. "We have conveyed our opinion on the issue once again to the German Ambassador (Hans-Joachim Vergau) and the British Charge d'Affaires (Hugh Mortimer)," a spokesman for the Turkish foreign ministry, Sermet Atacanli, said. He added that the pro-Kurdish news agency DEM and the journal Ozgur Politika, both based in Germany, were also mentioned in the meeting with the German ambassador. Turkey has recently stepped up pressure on European countries to have Med-TV closed, which it says acts as the mouthpiece of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

Epidemic kills about 100 in Sudan

KHARTOUM (R) — An unidentified epidemic has killed about 100 people in the past week in south Sudan's third largest town and more are dying every day, residents and press reports said on Wednesday. Mongo Ajak, the governor of upper Nile state, of which Malakal is the capital, told the privately owned Al Usba newspaper that 78 people had died in Malakal from the disease and it was still killing around five people a day. Other sources put the number of victims at over 100. One resident of the town told Reuters by telephone that the disease had killed more than 100 people and was spreading to the countryside. He said 17 very sick people were on a river barge on their way to northern Sudan to seek treatment, and even cattle and chickens were also dying from the disease.

Yemeni condemned to die for bombing

ADEN (AFP) — A southern Yemeni court on Wednesday sentenced one man to death and 10 others to prison terms for a bomb attack last year that killed five people. The court condemned Abdul Fattah Muhammad Awad and passed a jail sentence of 10 years on Hisham Nasser Tamimi. Nine other defendants received sentences ranging from two to three years and two others were acquitted. The men were found guilty of belonging to an armed group, "The Movement for Self-Determination," which opposed President Ali Abdullah Saleh, and the bomb attack in Khudud, to the north of Aden, in July last year.

Iraq sends second flight of pilgrims to S. Arabia

Agencies

NEARLY 18,000 Iraqis gathered at a border point with Saudi Arabia Wednesday and a government official accused the United Nations of delaying plans for financing their pilgrimage to Mecca.

"About 18,000 Iraqi citizens headed on Wednesday to the border point of Arar, anxious to participate along with millions of Muslim brotherhood in this year's Haj," a ministry of culture and information official said in a statement read to reporters.

He said Iraq had asked a U.N. Sanctions Committee on Iraq to allow it to draw \$2,000 per pilgrim from revenues of its so-called oil-for-food programme with the United

Nations

Sanctions Committee has instead followed a policy of procrastination and delayed the legitimate Iraqi demand," the official said.

In New York, chairman of the Sanctions Committee on Iraq, Ambassador Peter van Walsum of the Netherlands, told reporters that the United Nations abandoned efforts on Tuesday to work out a plan to enable up to 22,000 Iraqi pilgrims to make the annual Haj pilgrimage to Mecca without breaching sanctions. Earlier the committee had said it was prepared to make available \$44 million from the oil-for-food programme.

The United Nations says the sanctions — imposed over Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait — bar it from transferring the money through Iraq's central bank. It has proposed transferring the cash through a third party. Iraq has rejected this.

"Iraq is sticking to its demand and it knows that creating the game of a third party... is meant to prevent Iraqis from performing Haj," the Iraqi official said.

Earlier in the day, Iraq sent the second of three planned flights carrying pilgrims to Saudi Arabia in defiance of a U.N. air embargo and a Western-imposed no-fly zone.

A Russian-built Ilyushin-76 plane took off with 111 pilgrims from a military airport in southern Baghdad.

The head of Iraqi Airways, Rabea Mohammad Saleh, thanked Saudi Arabian authorities for allowing a similar plane

carrying 110 Iraqi pilgrims to land in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday.

"We have another flight tomorrow," he told reporters at Al Rasheed military airport in Baghdad.

Wednesday's pilgrims — elderly men in white cotton robes and women in veils — prayed and shouted Allahu Akbar (God is greatest) before boarding the plane.

Saleh said Iraq had not asked the U.N. Sanctions Committee to authorise the three flights.

Also Wednesday, Saudi Arabia turned down a U.S. request to seize the Iraqi Airways plane which flew in the Muslim pilgrims bound for Mecca despite a U.N. embargo, a Western diplomatic source said.

Kuwaitis, Saudis oppose condemnation of no-fly zones

CAIRO (AFP) — Kuwait and Saudi Arabia blocked the Arab League from debating Wednesday a proposal to condemn U.S. and British enforced no-fly zones over Iraq, a senior League official said.

But Iraq insisted it had the right to raise the issue during the Arab League foreign ministers meeting which opened here Wednesday, said the official who asked not to be named.

League members made a rare move to postpone a decision on the agenda until Thursday, he added.

Arab countries have become increasingly uncomfortable

with almost daily bombing and missile strikes carried out by U.S. and British warplanes patrolling the no-fly zones from bases in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid opened the meeting with an appeal for an "immediate halt" to air strikes against Iraq, which U.S. and British officials say are aimed at protecting their pilots from Iraqi threats.

Iraq activated its air defences against allied warplanes flying in the zones after the United States and Britain launched a four-day air war against Iraq in

December for its rejection of U.N. weapons inspectors.

The United States and its allies set up the zones after the 1991 Gulf War, saying that U.N. resolutions provided for the protection of Iraqi Kurds in the north and Shiite Muslims in the south.

However, there is no specific U.N. resolution calling for the no-fly zones.

The league official quoted Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal as saying "his country always opposed strikes against Iraq in principle" but that the United Nations was the proper place to discuss the exclusion

zones.

Kuwait and Saudi Arabia also refused an Iraqi proposal to examine the issue of "Kuwaiti, Saudi and Iraqi missing," the league official said. The two countries stressed there are no "missing" but "prisoners of war" captured by Iraq when it invaded Kuwait in 1990.

The decision on the agenda was put off until Thursday.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Sharara admitted there were divisions among the Arabs.

"There is no unanimity but a general tendency toward refusing the creation of exclusion

zones and continuation of air strikes against Iraq, which are a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions," Sharara said.

Thirty-six items are on the agenda of the conference, including Libya's crisis with the West over the Lockerbie bombing, Israeli policies and Iran's "occupation" of three Gulf islands claimed by the United Arab Emirates.

A minute of silence was observed at the beginning of the meeting for King Hussein, who died Feb. 7 and the emir of Bahrain, Sheikh Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifeh, who died March 6.

U.N. expert hits U.S. on Muslims, Native Americans

GENEVA (R) — The United Nations special investigator on religion said on Wednesday a pervasive "Islamophobia" existed in the United States fed by a "hate-filled" image of Muslims presented in the media.

In a report to be presented to the U.N.'s Human Rights Commission next week, he also said the beliefs and religious practices of Native Americans were often abused and were in need of greater protection.

The investigator, Tunisian lawyer Abdul Fattah Amor, argued that limits should be placed on freedom of the press "when it generates actual intolerance, the antithesis of freedom."

"The Muslim community can certainly flourish freely in the religious sphere, but it has to be recognised that there is an Islamophobia reflecting both racial and religious intolerance," he said.

"This is not the fault of the authorities, but of a very harmful activity by the media in general and the popular press in particular, which consists in putting out a distorted and indeed hate-filled message treating Muslims as extremists and terrorists," he added.

"American public opinion, and hence society, is thus informed, and formed, by negative representations of the Muslims," it added.

Amor, former dean of the law faculty at the University of Tunis, said the portrayal of Muslims by U.S. news organisations created the climate for vandalism against mosques, physical violence against Muslims, and job discrimination.

The administration of President Bill Clinton had launched initiatives aimed at preventing intolerance and discrimination on religious grounds directed against the Muslim community, estimated to total between 3.5 and 3.8 million.

But the public authorities had to help combat "the iniquitous representation of Muslims in the media," he said.

Amor compiled his report after a visit to the United States in January and February this year. On Tuesday, he issued another survey on religion in Vietnam, whose government he accused of keeping all believers under tight control.

On Native Americans, he said, a past policy of assimilation which they described as genocide continued to have its effects.

Although policies in favour of indigenous peoples had been set in motion in recent years, and particularly under the Clinton presidency, they needed to be strengthened in the religious sphere, the report said.

Government orders on the protection of Native Americans' sacred sites, many of them in areas under industrial or agricultural development, were not backed with legal teeth to enforce compliance.

Access to the sites was "a fundamental right in the sphere of religion, the exercise of which must be guaranteed," the U.N. investigator said.

Amor said it was essential to make U.S. society "and the whole of the administrative and political apparatus aware of the indigenous peoples' religious and spiritual beliefs to prevent any attitude... of discrimination in the field of religion."